

Penarth Group School

25 Buxton Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 6AD



Inspection dates

8–9 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' rates of progress are inconsistent. This is because teaching does not always present pupils with sufficient challenge.
- Senior leaders and governors do not always evaluate with sufficient rigour the impact of the strategies employed to improve pupils' performance, including the quality of teaching.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length, to show how they can link ideas and demonstrate their understanding.
- Pupils do not always act on their teachers' advice to improve their work. Consequently, pupils miss opportunities to learn from their mistakes.
- The priorities in the school improvement plan are not in an order of importance. It is not clear which should be tackled first in order to have the greatest impact on school development.
- Teachers' performance management targets do not place enough emphasis on their responsibility for pupils' outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- Relationships between the pupils and their teachers are characteristically warm and friendly. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and valued.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. This reflected in their regular attendance and good behaviour.
- Pupils' understanding of the meanings of key words and how to spell them correctly is effectively developed in lessons.
- Senior leaders promote productive links between parents and carers, reinforcing the partnership between home and school.
- Pupils make rapid gains in their personal development.
- Teachers make lessons meaningful to pupils by framing the learning in familiar contexts.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, fostering pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The new governing body provides senior leaders with an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- The choice of courses at key stage 4 prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that actions taken to improve the school are rigorously evaluated to determine their impact
 - making sure that the priorities in the school improvement plan are in order of importance; so that it is clear which should be tackled first in order to have the maximum impact on pupils' outcomes
 - ensuring that teachers are set performance management targets against which they can be held to account for their professional practice
 - making sure that attainment and progress data is shared with the teachers in order to inform their lesson planning, enabling them to prepare activities that are suitably challenging.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
 - ensuring that pupils act upon their teachers' advice on how to improve their work, thereby maximising the opportunities for pupils to learn from their mistakes and so accelerate their progress
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to write at length, so as to improve their writing skills and develop their understanding of topics.

- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
 - The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught; shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of pupils and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraphs 3(a) and 3(d)).
 - The proprietor must ensure that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3(g)).
 - The proprietor ensures that suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23(1)(C)).
 - The proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the school require improvement because leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met. The school does not provide suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils of 11 years and older who receive physical education. The quality of teaching has yet to lead to consistently good progress for pupils. Although none of these omissions are having a detrimental impact on pupils' welfare, health, safety and personal development, the quality of teaching requires improvement so that pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Arrangements for performance management are in place. The headteacher monitors the work of his colleagues, including by observing lessons and scrutinising the work in pupils' books. This enables him to check that teachers' work is consistent with school policies relating to professional practice and identify teachers' training needs. However, staff targets relate to their professional development and place insufficient emphasis on their responsibility for pupils' outcomes or the quality of their work in the classroom. This is leading to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and, as a consequence, teaching is not yet good. The governors' arrangements for the performance management of the headteacher, however, are rigorous and they have measures against which they can hold him to account for the school's performance.
- The headteacher has evaluated how well the school is doing, identified a number of improvement priorities and written a detailed plan to address them. However, the priorities are not in an order of importance. Consequently, it is not clear which priorities are the most important and should be tackled first so that they have the greatest impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The school's leadership arrangements were reviewed at the start of the year. As a result, the current headteacher was appointed and a governing body constituted. This has brought much needed stability to the school after a period of significant turbulence.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced; it provides pupils with a range of experiences that help to support their understanding of the key ideas in English, mathematics, science, technology and the creative arts.
- Innovative approaches to physical education ensure that even the most reluctant pupils participate in games and take regular exercise.
- The school's approach to personal, health, social and economic education and citizenship ensures that pupils gain an understanding of healthy relationships and the impact of substance abuse. They are introduced to the British political system and the United Kingdom's role in the European Union. They are given opportunities to reflect on the factors that influence their emotional well-being and their contribution to a law-abiding and caring society. The use of wall displays and the content of religious education promote pupils' tolerance of alternative lifestyles and an understanding of the different beliefs and cultures which make up the fabric of contemporary British society. Accordingly, the curriculum effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers challenge pupils who express opinions of others that are narrow and ill informed. The use of derogatory language is not tolerated. This reinforces the school's commitment to tackling discrimination, valuing diversity and fostering in pupils an understanding of fundamental British values. As a result, pupils are prepared effectively for life beyond the school.
- The careers programme is comprehensive. This course of study enables pupils to consider the range of options available to them when they leave the school and informs the decisions they make about the future direction of their lives.
- Parents and carers are involved in the regular reviews of their children's education, health and care plans. The school's website has recently been updated and is an easily accessible source of information for pupils and their families. In these ways, the school ensures that there are effective links between home and school to support pupils' learning and keep pupils safe.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The recently constituted governing body has been put in place to work with the headteacher to reassert the vision for the school and reaffirm the school's strategic direction. This is after a period of instability, prior to the start of the academic year, when the core purpose of the school, in providing for the academic needs of its pupils, had become blurred.
 - The governing body is a group of suitably experienced individuals who have the necessary expertise to take the school forward on its journey of improvement.
 - The chair of the governing body, who is also the proprietor, ensures that governors receive regular

updates from senior leaders about the school's progress in order to hold senior leaders to account.

- The governing body has supported the headteacher in establishing the arrangements for performance of staff but are aware that this is work in progress. They are aware that although the headteacher's and deputy headteacher's performance management targets enable them to be held to account for pupils' outcomes: this degree of accountability needs to be included in the targets for the rest of the staff.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding and child protection policies are compliant with the latest guidance from the Secretary of State and are available to parents on the school's website. The central record of the checks made on behalf of the governing body on the suitability of individuals to work with pupils meets requirements. Appropriate staff have received training in safe recruitment practices to ensure that chances of appointing unsuitable people to work with the pupils are minimised. The policies relating to health and safety and first aid are up to date and meet requirements. The governing body has ensured that appropriate risk assessments are in place to minimise the possibility of harm coming to the pupils or staff undertaking school activities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The headteacher collects data on pupils' performance against their targets every term. This enables him to form a picture of pupils' rates of progress across the curriculum and whether they are on track. He shares this information with the governing body in order to inform their evaluation of how well the school is doing. However, this data is not routinely shared with his colleagues. Consequently, the teachers are not always provided with all the information they need to inform their lesson planning. As a result, pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons and their progress slows. This is particularly the case for most-able pupils.
- Worksheets are used extensively in a number of subjects. As a consequence, opportunities for pupils to write at length to demonstrate their emerging understanding of a topic and how ideas link together are missed.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and in compliance with the school's policy. However, pupils' response to their teachers' feedback is too inconsistent. As a result, pupils do not always learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and lessons are well organised and structured, even if some of the activities pupils are given to do are insufficiently challenging. Teachers introduce ideas in a coordinated way so that ideas build one on another, giving coherence to pupils' learning.
- When planning learning, teachers use real-life contexts which enable pupils to make sense of their learning and see its purpose. For example, in science pupils have been investigating the effect of weightlessness and radiation on rocket salad seeds stored on the International Space Station. Work such as this enables pupils to see the relevance of scientific ideas to the real world.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully, to make pupils think hard about their learning and assess their understanding. As a result, teachers are able to identify pupils' misconceptions quickly and deal with them effectively.
- Improving pupils' literacy is a key component of the school's curriculum. Pupils are introduced to subject-specific vocabulary in all their lessons. This broadens their vocabulary and improves the accuracy of their spelling.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school staff are conversant with the most recent guidance from the Secretary of State on how to keep children safe in education. They are aware of the many signs that may indicate a child is being harmed and the action they should take.
The school staff know the pupils well. Relationships between the pupils and their teachers are cordial and built on a foundation of mutual respect. This contributes to an emotionally secure environment where pupils feel safe, well cared for and valued. As one pupil said, 'I'm looked after here. I was with the wrong crowd before I came to this school and the teachers help you.'
- The school's curriculum, for example the work in anti-bullying week, provides pupils with opportunities to explore the complex issues around bullying and the negative impact that bullying and other types of prejudiced behaviour can have on individuals. However, the pupils say that bullying is not an issue at

Penarth, but should it occur they are confident staff would deal with it effectively. The school's behaviour log supports the pupils' views. There has only been one incident of bullying since September and this was effectively resolved.

- The pupils can describe how to keep themselves safe when using mobile phones, tablet computers and other devices that can access the internet. For example, they know not to give out any personal information, while they are online. However, should pupils feel vulnerable when using their mobile devices they are clear about the actions they should take to protect themselves and who to report such incidents to.
- The building is secure, with controlled access for visitors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and they take pride in the work that they are given to do.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in pupils' attendance, which is broadly in line with the national average.
- Senior leaders monitor individual pupils' attendance carefully. This enables them to identify quickly any issues with pupils' attendance and enlist the support of parents and carers to address them. Should a pupil fail to register in the morning, their parents or carers receive a phone call from the headteacher to determine the reasons for the absence. In these ways, the potential risks to pupils who do not turn up for school are reduced.
- The school staff manage pupils' behaviour very effectively. The school's behaviour policy, with its emphasis on reinforcement of positive behaviour, provides pupils with tangible rewards for following the school's rules. The impact of this is evidenced in the school's behaviour log, which shows a marked decline in incidents of poor behaviour since the appointment of the headteacher.
- Pupils conduct themselves in an orderly fashion around the school. They arrive punctually in the morning and are on time for lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' rates of progress are inconsistent. This is because teaching does not always present pupils with sufficient challenge in order to make them think hard about their learning and deepen their understanding.
- In mathematics, pupils can spend too much time exploring an area of the subject when it is evident that their knowledge and understanding are secure and they are ready to move on. As a result, pupils' progress is not as rapid as it could be. This is particularly the case for most-able pupils.
- Prior to enrolment at the school, many pupils have had their education disrupted and as a consequence have levels of attainment below those typical for their age. In order to determine pupils' starting points and to set targets for future performance, pupils are given subject-specific assessments when they arrive at the school. One of these checks includes an assessment of pupils' reading ages. However, even though pupils read every day, senior leaders do not measure pupils' reading ages again to determine whether this strategy is having sufficient impact. Consequently, pupils' rates of progress in reading have not been determined.
- Pupils are encouraged to speak and express their opinions. This has a positive effect on the development of their speaking and listening skills.
- In the creative subjects, pupils make rapid progress over time. For example, in a food technology lesson a pupil was able to prepare high-quality vegetable wraps using a range of ingredients with minimal input from the teacher because they were able to orchestrate a range of skills successfully.
Pupils have access to a range of qualifications at key stage 4. They are able to follow GCSE programmes in a number of subjects including English, mathematics and science. Pupils are able to develop their life and employability skills through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) scheme and achieve academic qualifications by following courses of study in a range of subjects accredited by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). This opens up the breadth of opportunities available to pupils when they leave, highlighting the school's commitment to equal opportunities.
- Over time, few pupils have completed key stage 4 at the school and consequently comparisons of the school's examination performance against national figures are unhelpful. For example, last year no pupils took GCSE examinations. Nevertheless, historically the school's record of attainment for pupils at the end of Year 11 is positive. The vast majority of pupils at the end of key stage 4 successfully complete their courses of study or achieve GCSE grades in line with the school's expectations. As a result, this has prepared pupils

well for the next stage of their education, training or future employment. As most pupils have special educational needs and are supported by a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan this represents successful outcomes.

- The school staff monitor pupils' personal development effectively. The school's records show that all pupils on roll, irrespective of their circumstances or degree of special educational needs, are making rapid gains in their behaviour, self-esteem and confidence. The chair of the governing body commented favourably on this aspect of the school's work.

School details

Unique reference number	135526
Inspection number	10008045
DfE registration number	356/6031

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mrs Patricia Swallow
Chair	Mrs Patricia Swallow
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Watson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,700
Telephone number	0161 483 1212
Website	www.penarthgroup.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@penarthgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 March 2012

Information about this school

- The Penarth Group Independent Day School opened in March 2008.
- The school is located in the Hazel Grove area of Stockport, about three miles south-east of Stockport town centre.
- The school is mixed. It is registered, with the Department for Education, to meet the needs of up to 15 pupils between the ages of eight and 16 years.
- All pupils speak English as their first language.
- There are currently 3 pupils on roll, all of whom have an education, health and care plan for emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The school's long-term aim is to provide an environment which is safe, nurturing, collaborative and respectful, so that pupils can make progress and achieve.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a great deal of staff turbulence, particularly at senior leadership level. The headteacher is a relatively new appointment, joining the staff at the start of the academic year. The governing body has been in place since the start of the spring term.
- All pupils attending the school receive their education on site.
- The school is part of the Penarth Group and the headteacher is responsible to the group's proprietor.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out a range of activities during this inspection. Accompanied by the headteacher, he made a tour of the school to check that the school premises comply with the independent school standards.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, who is also the chair of the governing body, the headteacher, members of the teaching staff and the pupils.
- The inspector observed teaching and evaluated the quality of the work in pupils' books. He observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and it was not possible for the inspector to speak with pupils' parents or carers during the inspection.
- The inspector took into account the three responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for teaching staff.
- School policies, the curriculum plan and schemes of work were examined to check their compliance with statutory guidance and to provide extra information for the inspection.
- The record of the checks made by the school on the suitability of the staff to work with young people were scrutinised by the inspector. He also checked a selection of staff personnel files to ensure that the employer had carried out the required pre-employment checks.
- The school's records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding were evaluated. The inspector also considered the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

Charles Lowry, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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