

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



27 June 2016

Mr Steve Wilson  
Headteacher  
Pendle Vale College  
Oxford Road  
Nelson  
Lancashire  
BB9 8LF

Dear Mr Wilson

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Pendle Vale College**

Following my visit with Osama Abdul Rahim, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 14 June 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with you, your leadership team and other staff to discuss safeguarding arrangements and personal development, behaviour and welfare. I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings were held with different groups of staff, the chair and members of the governing body. Inspectors spoke by telephone to an officer from the local authority and to the school improvement partner. Inspectors also spoke with pupils, in meetings and informally, to discuss how the school helps them to keep safe from harm and supports their welfare. In addition, inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school site. They considered pupils' entry to and exit from school and the behaviour of pupils during social times. The inspectors conducted a series of short visits to classes across the school in order to observe pupils' behaviour and assess their safety. Inspectors made visits to

the area pupils are sent when their behaviour in lessons is inappropriate. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and to the school's own surveys of the opinions of parents and pupils. In addition, inspectors considered written responses provided during the inspection by members of staff. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including reports to governors, policies relating to safeguarding and personal development, behaviour and welfare, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information about pupils' attendance, and information about pupils' behaviour and welfare. Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that there is a strong culture of care for pupils and for their safeguarding in the school. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and the school's provision for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare is effective. The behaviour of pupils across the school is not of concern.

## **Context**

Pendle Vale College is an average-sized secondary school with 1,025 pupils on roll. The number of pupils on roll is increasing and currently there are equal numbers of boys and girls in the school. Over three quarters of pupils are from minority ethnic groups; the majority are of Pakistani heritage. A large majority of pupils speak a first language other than English. A higher than average proportion of pupils, well over a third, come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are therefore eligible for support through the pupil premium. (This is government funding for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and for children looked after by the local authority.) The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or a disability is similar to the national average. There is a full complement of staff at the school. Several new members of staff will take up post at the start of the autumn term.

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding arrangements and procedures operate properly and promptly. Leaders have ensured that staff and governors receive timely and appropriate training in child protection and safeguarding issues. All staff involved are well-versed in their responsibilities and have a clear understanding of current guidance and legislation. The school's safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website, is clear and informative. The school site is safe and secure. Detailed risk assessments are in place for trips, visits and other activities where pupils' safety is of paramount concern. A number of leaders and governors have completed safer recruitment training; they ensure that appropriate checks on staff are thorough and rigorous from the point when they are recruited. Leaders ensure that there is appropriate staff supervision at key times of the day, such as when pupils enter and leave the premises and at lesson changeover times. The entrance to the building is well supervised and visitors' credentials are carefully checked. Leaders ensure that fire evacuation procedures are effective and that fire drills are regularly undertaken.

The school's systems for child protection are effectively led by the designated safeguarding lead. The school's safeguarding team includes staff with experience and skills to undertake their wide-ranging roles. There are effective communication systems at the school that enable rapid action to be taken whenever child protection issues arise. This has ensured that 'no stone goes unturned' in supporting individual pupils. For example, social workers and school counsellors with specialist knowledge provide timely support and involve families in keeping pupils safe from harm. As a result, pupils are safe and barriers to learning are removed. Parents appreciate the support that the safeguarding team provides for their families. Parents' responses to the school's survey indicate how important the school's work in this respect is to them: 'The safeguarding team are excellent; they have been supportive beyond expectation'. 'Nurture at Pendle Vale is second to none'. The safeguarding team also drives a plethora of initiatives across the school and provides current and relevant guidance for pupils and staff. For example, pupils are provided with a 'healthy relationships' programme which enhances pupils' understanding of drugs and alcohol misuse, sexual health and the dangers of grooming.

Pupils know whom to turn to for support, or if any concerns arise. They have plentiful opportunities to develop their understanding of how to keep safe from potential risks and dangers. For example, they learn about dangers associated with the use of social media, through assemblies and lessons delivered during form time. A recent e-safety day ensured that Year 7 pupils were taught how to stay safe online and about the risks associated with using new technologies.

Equality of opportunity and the celebration of diversity have a high priority in the school. Pendle Vale is a 'Stonewall Champion School' and there are strong and clear messages and displays around the site reinforcing ways in which pupils and staff can show respect for each other. Consequently, the school has recently been awarded a range of quality marks: Lancashire Disability Equality Badge; Lancashire Race Equality Badge and Lancashire Sexual Orientation Equality Badge.

The 'Student Support Centre' (SSC) is the hub of safeguarding and welfare and provides rich support for staff and pupils. Pupils are taught to respect the views of others; they learn about cultures and lifestyles that are different from their own. For example, a recent interfaith and diversity week supported a range of ethnic identities and celebrated difference and mutual understanding among pupils. Regular faith groups, including a prayer group, are widely promoted across the school. As a result of the school's work to promote cultural understanding and tolerance, racism is an extremely rare occurrence across the school. The vast majority of pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Pupils told inspectors that there are very few incidents of bullying and that staff deal with instances quickly and effectively through the use of staff in the SCC. Pupils are clear about whom they can go to if they have a problem and this is well signposted across the school.

Staff respond quickly and efficiently to pupils' absence. Procedures include text messages and telephone calls to a pupil's home on the first day of absence, along with some home visits. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent (missing more than 10% of days from school) is around the national figure, as is the overall attendance figure. This success is despite the challenge of high deprivation in the community. The importance of attendance is signposted in displays around the school and leaders use frequent initiatives to celebrate and reward good attendance. The attendance manager and attendance officer have their fingers on the pulse regarding pupils' attendance. They analyse information and communicate well with a wide range of leaders across the school. They have a good knowledge of pupils and their families. Vulnerable pupils and those at risk are known to school staff. Consequently, appropriate steps are taken promptly if concerns arise. The school makes appropriate referrals to the local authority's children missing in education team if they have concerns about a child's long-term absence.

Governors receive regular reports on safeguarding across the school and are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and development priorities. They identify any underperformance within the school and insist on improvements that will continue to move the school forward. The vast majority of staff who spoke with inspectors said that they were happy in the school and felt very well supported. Staff care about the school and understand the culture and ethos that underpin learning. A comment by a member of staff made in writing during the inspection typified the views of many: 'I am delighted with my move to Pendle Vale as the positive culture, pastoral support and high standards creates an atmosphere in which I can largely focus on supporting the needs of my students to ensure progress.' One member of staff indicated some concerns and dissatisfaction during the inspection but inspectors found no evidence to substantiate any of the issues raised.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pendle Vale is calm and orderly and great pride is taken in the display of pupils' work across the school. Pupils are pleasant and relaxed with one another and respectful to staff. Relationships between staff and pupils are typically warm and supportive. Pupils are sensible in social areas and their behaviour during breaks and lunchtimes is calm and well controlled. The school has an effective system to monitor and analyse patterns of behaviour and attendance in lessons. Staff are well trained and consistently apply the behaviour policy across the school. However, leaders have not ensured that the policy is updated with all the current initiatives and practices that are in place across the school. Progress development leaders work well with form tutors to analyse, discuss and respond to pupils' behaviour and attendance needs. Early concerns about pupils are flagged and appropriate support plans are quickly launched to support individual pupils. This 'early radar' system ensures that no pupils slip through the net.

Pupils understand about all forms of bullying, including bullying related to racism, discrimination and homophobia. Pupils typically respect the rights and values of others. Records of bullying show that incidents are rare and appropriate actions are taken by leaders. Pupils say that, should bullying ever occur, staff will deal with it effectively. Governors also make diligent checks on bullying logs frequently throughout the year. Parents who responded to the school's recent survey are positive about behaviour and agree that any bullying is dealt with effectively. Most pupils, parents and carers are confident that safety in school is underpinned by clear rules and responsibilities, good relationships and positive behaviour. The vast majority of parents feel the school is well led. The majority of pupils display pride in their work and have good attitudes to learning. However, some pupils' aspirations are not high enough and there is not always a thirst for learning in lessons. Inspectors found that a very small minority of boys are less likely to display strong attitudes to learning and consequently have lower aspirations. An internal exclusion room for supervised study is used in response to the occasional instances of poor behaviour. Leaders ensure that there is a strong focus on reflection, restorative work and anger management. Leaders use the highly experienced safeguarding team wisely to plan successful individual support for pupils. Consequently, patterns of repeat entry into the centre are vastly reduced.

There is a community feel to the school; staff and pupils respect each other. Leaders provide excellent opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally within lessons and through assemblies. Leaders are keen for pupils to empathise and support those less fortunate than themselves. For example, the school council demonstrates social responsibility by organising and raising awareness of those less fortunate than themselves; pupils raised funds for 'Sport Relief' and local food bank charities. Pupils across the school also fill Christmas hampers which are delivered to those in need across the local community. Teachers ensure that pupils are taught about key moral and social issues through the curriculum.

Leaders have also established the 'Active Citizenship Campaign' at key stage 3 to deepen pupils' understanding of world issues. For example, pupils are involved in 'Send My Friend to School', a fundraising campaign which highlights the plight of children in different parts of the world who are missing out on their right to education due to conflicts, natural disasters and emergencies. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain; they learn about justice, democracy and respect for others. The Holocaust Memorial Day assembly ensured pupils were able to discuss human rights and international law and liberty.

Leaders remain focused on improving attendance still further across the school and use a wide variety of strategies to promote the importance of attendance among pupils. However, parents' participation at attendance panel meetings is low. Consequently, actions relating to specific pupils do not always have a strong impact.

## **External support**

The local authority provides support for the school through the use of a school improvement adviser. Visits are frequent and support is provided by evaluating the school's performance, identifying priorities for improvement and helping to build the school's capacity to improve. The improvement partner provides appropriate challenge and reflection for senior leaders and governors. As a result, leaders' development plans and self-evaluation are accurate. Effective use is made of the local authority's safeguarding team to secure additional advice and guidance on child protection and staffing matters. Channels of communication are clear between the school and other agencies such as the local 'Prevent' team and the local authority designated officer for safeguarding.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Drive up pupils' aspirations and inject a thirst for learning to ensure that more pupils, particularly boys, have strong attitudes to learning.
- Ensure that the behaviour policy reflects current practice within the school.
- Strengthen strategies to engage parents across the school so that they have further impact on pupils' attendance and consequently achievement.

I am copying this letter to the director of children's services for Lancashire, the Secretary of State for Education and the chair of the governing body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dawn Platt

**Her Majesty's Inspector**