

Penarth Group School

128 Reddish Road, South Reddish, Stockport SK5 7JG

Inspection dates

31 October – 2 November 2017

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
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Governors do not hold senior leaders stringently to account for the school's performance. Leaders, including governors, have an overly rosy view of how well pupils are achieving. They are not making good enough use of the wealth of information available to evaluate pupils' performance.
- The quality of teaching is variable. In some subjects, including English, teachers do not set work which challenges pupils and helps them make the strong progress of which they are capable. Leaders' checks have not been thorough enough to alert them to these issues.
- Performance management does not impact sufficiently on the quality of teaching. Leaders do not provide enough training opportunities to help teachers improve their performance.
- Leaders do not make sure that teachers use pupils' targets to plan lessons which help pupils acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to catch up quickly. Teachers do not share targets with pupils routinely so they know what they need to do next.
- Staff training has not focused on the full range of pupils' additional needs.

The school has the following strengths

- Almost all pupils have excellent attendance. Pupils value their education and are keen to succeed at school.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well. Personalised programmes tailored to their individual needs help them prepare well for their next steps.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well across the curriculum. Pupils acquire traditional British values and learn to respect people different to themselves.
- New pupils settle quickly and soon conform to teachers' high expectations for behaviour. Any isolated incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with quickly. Bullying is very rare.
- Leaders have created a caring and nurturing learning environment. Pupils facing personal challenges are supported well to make the most of their time at the school.
- Pupils are polite, listen attentively to their teachers and take care with their work.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and governance by:
 - developing an accurate view of how well the school is doing, informed by a wealth of reliable information, including accurate pupil performance information
 - providing relevant training for governors to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively and ensure that they are able to challenge and hold school leaders to account with increasing confidence
 - managing the performance management of teaching staff so that the process improves the quality of teaching
 - making sure that classroom monitoring is regular, rigorous and challenges weak practice.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress from their different starting points in all subjects by:
 - providing appropriate, high-quality training for teaching staff, to improve their practice
 - making sure that staff have suitable training to help them better meet the range of special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities of pupils who join the school
 - ensuring that that teachers use pupils' targets to help them plan work which help pupils acquire the skills and knowledge they need to catch up quickly
 - sharing targets with pupils so that pupils understand what they need to know and be able to do
 - teachers setting work that is challenging enough to enable all pupils, especially the most able, the disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, to make the rapid progress they need to catch up quickly with pupils nationally, in all subjects
 - making sure that pupils' English and mathematics targets are shared with all teaching staff so that pupils get more opportunities to practise their basic skills across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have an overly rosy view of how well pupils are getting on academically. Leaders have not paid heed sufficiently to the wide range of evidence available to give them an accurate view of the progress that pupils are making across the school. Consequently, leaders have failed to ensure that pupils are achieving the standards they are capable of consistently across the curriculum.
- Leaders have not made sure that staff have the training to support the wide range of needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This means that these pupils do not always get the specialist support they need to help them overcome some of their barriers to learning.
- The school's performance management arrangements do not have sufficient impact on teaching and learning. These arrangements do not raise teachers' expectations and ensure that they all have the skills to teach well. Leaders do not provide enough training opportunities to help teachers to improve their performance.
- Staff and pupils are delighted by the new premises and accommodation. Leaders have ensured that the necessary works have been carried out to bring these up to standard. Staff and pupils agree that the new building is more conducive to teaching and learning.
- The school's broad curriculum offer enables pupils to gain key qualifications which will stand them in good stead when they leave the school. Leaders make sure that sufficient time is given to teaching English and mathematics so that pupils have chance to make up lost ground. The flexible curriculum offer meets the wide range of needs of pupils who join the school.
- The school complements its core curriculum offer with a wealth of enrichment activities. Visits outside of school, coupled with visitors and themed weeks, are strengthening pupils' enjoyment of school. Furthermore, this work is underpinning pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a visit to a local cemetery developed pupils' empathy for soldiers who fought in the First World War.
- The school works well with parents, carers and other partners to make sure that children looked after receive the help and support they need. Pupils, carers and local authority representatives talk highly of the work of the school and the positive difference it has made for these pupils, both academically and personally.
- All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, benefit from the small-group teaching and flexible curriculum offer. This school is often the 'last hope' for pupils. However, pupils agree that the school has restored their pride in themselves, improved their attitudes to learning and put their education back on track.
- Some subject leaders are racing ahead and using a range of sources of guidance and support to good effect. They have a clear overview of their subject, using this information well to identify key priorities. These subject leaders are growing in confidence. They value the support of senior leaders as they try out new ideas. This accounts for the improvements in the teaching of science and physical education.
- Pupils are gaining the skills, values and attributes to make a positive contribution to modern society. Their understanding of British values is promoted well. Pupils learn about

other cultures and different faiths. During a recent celebration of Black History Month, pupils posed and considered the question why there was no similar event for 'White history'. Pupils are aware of the plight of those with life-limiting illnesses and hold coffee mornings and other events to raise money to help these people and their families.

- Leaders have ensured that all independent school standards are met. The headteacher's understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is more accurate now.

Governance

- Governors are not holding school leaders to account robustly. Records of meetings expose a lack of challenge to leaders by governors. Governors are overly reliant on the information provided to them by the headteacher to evaluate the school's performance. Too few governors have visited the school in their capacity as governors. Moreover, there is not yet sufficient rigour in the visits made. As a result, governors do not know the school well enough yet, to make a significant contribution to the school's improvement.
- Although governors have a wealth of valuable skills and expertise, most have limited experience of education. This is hindering their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as governors. Moreover, they lack confidence in challenging and supporting the senior leadership team.
- Governors are passionate about the school. They take a keen interest in both pupils and staff. Governors are supportive of the headteacher. Governors are committed to improving the school and aware of their shortcomings.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy, which complies with government requirements, is published on the school's website.
- Leaders make sure that staff are suitable to work with children.
- Leaders make sure that staff are up to date with their training so they understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff are highly vigilant. Good relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils feel confident to talk to an adult if they have any concerns.
- The school has appropriate systems for staff to report any concerns. Excellent partnerships with parents and carers ensure that any concerns are shared appropriately. Pupils, staff, parents and carers agree that pupils are well cared for and safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across all subjects, such as English and information and communications technology, to secure strong progress for all pupils.
- Not all teachers are not making good enough use of the information they have on pupils' starting points to ensure that the work set is sufficiently challenging. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are often too low. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to think hard, make mistakes and work things out for themselves. Some teachers step in too quickly and overscaffold tasks. Consequently, pupils are not making the progress which they are capable of in all subjects.

- Targets set for pupils do not have an impact on work in classrooms. Teachers do not consistently plan lessons which help pupils acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding to reach their target. Teachers do not share targets with pupils routinely so that pupils know how well they are getting on and what they need to do next. Consequently, pupils do not reach the targets which leaders set for them.
- The quality of teaching varies too much between subjects. In some subjects, teachers use what they know about pupils to set tasks which engage and enthuse pupils. These rich tasks promote progress, capture pupils' interests and enable them to deepen their skills. For example, pupils enjoyed taking part in a 'Hogwarts potions class' when learning about chemical reactions in science. In mathematics, pupils relished reasoning and problem-solving activities which helped them to deepen their understanding of negative numbers. However, this is not the case across all classes.
- The impact of teachers' questioning is variable. Some teachers, especially in science and mathematics, demonstrate good questioning skills that help pupils think hard for themselves, and this has facilitated good progress in their work over time. However, in some classes, pupils' progress slows because teachers ask questions that are too easy.
- Most teachers follow the school's own policy to give pupils verbal and written feedback on their work. Pupils find that this information helps them to improve their work. However, some teachers do not use this approach consistently well.
- The school ensures that pupils read frequently. The school has invested in new books, both fiction and non-fiction, and set up a cosy reading corner. However, teachers do not make effective use of daily reading sessions to help pupils develop their reading skills systematically. The fact that there are too many missed opportunities to help pupils read easily, fluently and with good understanding hampers pupils' progress, not only in English but also across the curriculum.
- Leaders do not provide teachers, some of whom are at early stages in their career, with sufficient training to improve their teaching. These teachers at the early stages of their careers are willing to learn. They are highly proactive, independently seeking out examples of good practice elsewhere. These teachers reflect on their own practice and encourage colleagues to help them improve their performance. However, the lack of a systematic approach by leaders to staff training means that weaknesses in teaching are not being reduced quickly enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite and respectful to staff, visitors and each other. They look smart in their uniforms. Pupils look after their classroom, books and other resources.
- Pupils are proud of the responsibilities they have been given recently. Pupils enjoy representing the school at community events as well as supporting pupils from local special schools to take part in sporting activities. Digital ambassadors help to keep parents and carers up to date with what is happening in school using online communication tools. These pupils also make sure that they give their peers advice about how to stay safe online. Pupils value the opportunity to share their views in the 'student

voice' meetings. They are pleased that staff have listened to and acted on some of their suggestions.

- The school encourages pupils to establish healthy lifestyles. Pupils are encouraged to take part in the wealth of sporting activities offered by the school. Visits from professional athletes inspire pupils to try new sports. Most pupils improve their levels of fitness through activities including climbing, trampolining and orienteering. Recently, pupils were proud to represent Stockport at a regional athletics competition.
- Pupils are taught to respect other people, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion or sexuality. Staff use opportunities across the curriculum to challenge pupils' stereotypes. Pupils are encouraged to share their views and shown how to listen to and respect the opinions of others. Staff are quick to challenge any inappropriate or derogatory language.
- Staff use opportunities throughout the school day to make sure that pupils develop their understanding of the world around them, for example marking significant national events such as Remembrance Day. Moreover, staff encourage pupils to be curious about current affairs, both nationally and internationally.
- Pupils receive appropriate information to make informed decisions about their next steps. Pupils are encouraged to find out about careers linked to their interests and aptitudes. They are encouraged to use this information to make decisions about their next steps at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Pupils who have left the school at the end of Year 11 have moved on to appropriate destinations, often embarking on college courses to continue their education
- Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying at the school. They are confident that any emerging issues would be dealt with swiftly by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Almost all pupils join the school with a history of poor behaviour and repeated exclusions. Despite this, pupils conform quickly to the school's high expectations for behaviour when they start at the school. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers, follow instructions promptly and complete the work set. Any rare incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with well by staff, in line with school policy.
- Almost all pupils attend school on time, every day. Despite most pupils' poor attendance records at their previous schools, pupils value their education and enjoy attending this school. The school provides high levels of effective support to those families who struggle to get their child to school regularly and punctually.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Across the school, pupils do not make consistently strong progress from their different starting points so that they make up the ground lost prior to joining the school. New pupils settle quickly and are soon ready to learn when they join the school. However, some teachers fail to capitalise on this success. These teachers miss opportunities to set pupils tasks with increasing levels of challenge. As a result, pupils do not make the rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding of which they are capable.

- Not all teachers make effective use of information about pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding to help them plan lessons which ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress both in lessons and over time. Work in books testifies to this lack of challenge, particularly in English.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they could in writing. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of and skills in writing in English lessons. Lack of opportunities for pupils to plan, draft, edit and proof read their work is hampering progress. Moreover, standards of writing for individual pupils are variable across the curriculum.
- Almost all pupils have missed considerable chunks of their education prior to joining the school. This means that almost all pupils are working well below the standards expected for their chronological age. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching over time mean that pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable. Consequently, pupils have not caught up quickly enough in all subjects.
- For many pupils, it has been a long time since they stepped into a classroom and took part in a lesson. Almost all have resigned themselves to failure in education. For these pupils, Penarth Group School gives them the opportunity to make a fresh start. Pupils testify to the positive difference this has made to their attendance, behaviour and academic learning.
- The school makes sure that, despite its small size, pupils are able to work towards recognised academic qualifications including GCSEs. As a result, pupils are able to move on to appropriate post-16 courses to build on the positive start they have made since joining this school.
- The high turnover and small number means that few pupils are entered for external examinations. For the very small number of pupils who have been entered, the overwhelming majority achieved at least five recognised qualifications including English and mathematics. For these pupils, this is a significant success from their starting points.
- Many pupils arrive at school reluctant readers. Teachers work hard to encourage them to pick up a book or newspaper initially. However, more-established pupils talk enthusiastically about the books they are reading and obviously gain real pleasure from this. However, teachers fail to capitalise on these opportunities to develop pupils' reading skills.
- Pupils enjoy practical lessons such as physical education and science. Work in books, discussions with pupils and the school's own assessment data confirm that pupils make strong gains in these subjects.
- Pupils make steady progress in mathematics. Many pupils have considerable gaps in their learning when they join the school. This makes pupils' progress somewhat erratic as the teacher takes time to fill pupils' gaps in some topics while moving on quickly in topics where pupils demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding.

Sixth form provision

Good

- All independent school standards are met in relation to sixth-form provision.
- Leaders quite rightly recognised a gap in their provision for their oldest students, who are not yet ready to move on. Parents and carers are positive that this provision will provide

their children with much-needed additional time at the school. This makes sure that these learners are better prepared for their next steps.

- Staff ensure that students are given the advice and guidance they need to make informed decisions about their next steps. Staff make sure that learners are clear about the requirements for their preferred destinations.
- The school makes sure that students are given the appropriate information to keep themselves safe. Students trust the adults who work with them and are comfortable to share any worries or ask any questions. Staff are highly skilled at raising students' awareness of the risky situations they may put themselves in. Consequently, students are able to make better decisions to protect themselves.
- It is not intended that the school will continue to provide 16 to 19 provision, so leaders have focused on developing the curriculum offer for those students currently attending the provision. For these students, the personalised curriculums help them to make up lost ground due to gaps in their education prior to joining the school as well as to prepare for independent living. Consequently, the school's oldest students are better prepared for their next steps.
- Leaders ensure that they continue to build on the individualised programmes in key stage 5. The seamless transition from key stage 4 ensures that no time is lost as pupils move into key stage 5.
- Students' regular attendance and continued engagement with academic learning means that they continue to build on the progress they made in key stage 4.

School details

Unique reference number	135526
DfE registration number	356/6031
Inspection number	10040275

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 independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Pat Swallow
Chair	Pat Swallow
Headteacher	Stephen Watson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,700
Telephone number	0161 483 1212
Website	www.penarthgroupschool.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@penarthgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 June 2016

Information about this school

- The Penarth Group School opened in March 2008.
- The school moved to the current premises in May 2017. A material change inspection was carried out in April 2017 in relation to the suitability of these new premises.
- The school is mixed. It is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to meet the needs of up to 15 pupils between the ages of eight and 16 years. The school has had a material change authorised by the DfE to allow it to admit a small number of pupils aged up to 17 years old for the 2016/17 academic year.

- Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- All the pupils on roll have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's long-term aim is to nurture confident individuals and responsible citizens, who can lead safe and happy lives and who will make a positive contribution to society.
- The headteacher joined the staff in September 2015.
- The governing body has been in place since January 2016.
- The school was previously inspected in July 2016.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- Two members of the teaching staff, including the headteacher, are qualified teachers. The other staff are unqualified teachers who have relevant qualifications and/or experience in the subjects they teach.
- The school is part of the Penarth Group and the headteacher is responsible to the group's proprietor.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school, including a joint observation with the headteacher. The inspector checked work in a range of pupils' books with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the governing body and representatives of three local authorities who have pupils placed at the school.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school self-evaluation and assessment information.
- Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils as well as informally during the school day and observed them during breaktimes.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of parents and carers during the inspection. There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke formally with a group of staff and considered the four responses to Ofsted's survey.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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