

Pier View Academy

42-44 Harmer Street, Gravesend, Kent DA12 2AX

Inspection dates

11–13 June 2019

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are fully met. However, the curriculum is not designed effectively to ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding are accrued systematically.
- Leaders' plans to improve the school are in their early stages. For example, they have actions in place to improve the effectiveness of learning support assistants, but these are not fully implemented.
- Leaders do not have an accurate oversight of pupils' achievements. Systems to track and monitor pupils' outcomes are not effective.
- In some subjects, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- In some subjects, teaching is not planned effectively. Sometimes, learning does not consider pupils' starting points. When this is the case, activities are not sequenced well.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form provision is not yet good. This is because activities planned by teachers are not always challenging enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive board members know the school well. They have an accurate view of what needs to improve and the skills and expertise to challenge leaders well.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe and have the skills to protect themselves from harm.
- Mathematics is taught well throughout the school. From their differing starting points, pupils are challenged effectively.
- Pupils' well-being is promoted to a high standard. Pupils develop knowledge and a wide range of skills that enable them, for instance, to manage stress effectively and look after their sexual health.
- A range of successful techniques are in place to support pupils to manage their behaviour. As a result, incidents of challenging behaviour decrease overtime.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes, across the school, by making sure that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve
 - across all subjects, teachers plan activities that develop and deepen pupils' knowledge.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - existing plans to improve the effectiveness of support staff have a positive impact on pupils' learning
 - systems to monitor and evaluate pupils' outcomes are refined
 - the curriculum enables pupils to consistently build upon their existing knowledge and skills in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Presently, the school is going through a period of change in leadership. The previous headteacher left in December 2018. Since then, the school has been led by a range of senior leaders from across the group. Over time, improvement has stalled. However, current leaders are beginning to ensure that standards of education rise quickly.
- There are inconsistencies in the design and implementation of the curriculum. For example, in some subjects, not enough care is given to ensure that pupils build upon their existing knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, in some subjects, including English, some pupils have gaps in their learning.
- Historically, school improvement planning has not been rigorous enough. Leaders' plans are now fit for purpose. However, the impact these are having on pupils' achievements is not yet clear.
- Leaders are not tracking and monitoring pupils' progress sufficiently. They do not have a clear enough picture of what pupils do and do not know. Because of this, their evaluation of pupils' progress is overgenerous.
- Recent initiatives to improve teaching and learning are beginning to prove successful. For example, recent training is helping staff to ask more searching questions of pupils during lessons. Staff are appreciative of these development opportunities and feel that they are having a positive impact on their practice.
- In the past year, leaders have made changes to teachers' planning to ensure that activities are matched to pupils' starting points. Although relatively recent, these improvements are already having a positive effect on the quality of pupils' work. However, this aspect of the school's work rightly remains a focus for the school's development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. They are encouraged to understand the importance of respecting views that differ from their own. They know that discriminating against someone for their faith or sexual orientation is wrong. Pupils are well placed to contribute effectively to life in modern Britain.
- Typically, parents hold Pier View Academy in high regard. One comment, echoing the views of many others, stated, 'Pier View treats my child as an individual. I simply love this school.' Another expressed the view, 'I don't think the school can do any better, it's simply brilliant.'
- Staff comment positively on the recent changes implemented across the school, particularly in relation to the recent changes to the school's layout. They feel well supported by leaders and are aware of where improvements at the school are needed.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met.

Governance

- The executive board members, including the proprietor, accurately evaluate the school's effectiveness. They possess a suitably wide range of skills to monitor leaders' actions and hold leaders effectively to account for the work of the school.

- Governance has a good oversight of statutory requirements, including safeguarding and health and safety. For example, regular fire checks are made to ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Fire Safety Order 2005.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- When recruiting staff, leaders carry out all appropriate background checks. They record this information accurately on the school's single central record. Robust safer recruitment systems ensure that adults are suitable to work with young people.
- The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. The policy meets current government requirements and provides valuable safeguarding information, including what to do in the case of a concern and how to contact the appropriate personnel.
- Staff have very strong safeguarding knowledge. They have a thorough understanding of the local issues that young people face and use this to help protect them from harm. Leaders and those responsible for safeguarding talk eloquently about actions they take to protect young people from the threats of county lines and gang activity.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. They know not to share personal information on social media and ensure that their private information is kept secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning varies across the school. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not routinely high enough across all subjects. Where this is the case, some pupils are not motivated to work hard enough, and the standard of their work is too low.
- Teaching does not consistently consider pupils' different starting points. In some subjects, activities do not successfully build upon what pupils have already learned. When this is the case, learning is not sequenced appropriately to ensure that pupils are challenged to make strong progress.
- The support provided by additional staff does not consistently help pupils learn. Learning support staff are frequently limited to managing and supporting pupils' behaviour. Leaders are aware of this and have developed plans to make better use of support staff in improving pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers successfully encourage pupils to read widely at school. They make sure that pupils have regular opportunities to read a wide range of good-quality texts during their time in school.
- In most lessons, teachers' questioning is strong. During the inspection, this was particularly the case in physical education and mathematics. For example, in physical education, strong questioning enabled pupils to gain a secure understanding of the key component of various badminton strokes.
- In mathematics, pupils' prior learning is built upon and extended through effective planning which takes account of pupils' starting points. Learning is typically challenging,

requiring pupils to think deeply. Pupils rise to this challenge, frequently meeting teachers' high expectations.

- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and develop very positive relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils are confident to ask for help when they need it.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff understand the needs of individual pupils extremely well. Leaders have created a culture where staff appreciate that pupils' emotional well-being is an important foundation to their educational progress.
- Opportunities are sought for pupils to make choices about the issues that affect them at school. For example, pupils are encouraged to choose their weekly enrichment activity. More recently, pupils have had an input into the planning of the school's curriculum so that it better takes into account their skills and interests.
- Pupils are respectful of each other and staff. Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe when they are in school and that they know whom to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils confirm that bullying rarely happens at the school, and when it does, staff manage this well.
- The school provides a range of additional support that helps pupils to manage identified anxieties or difficulties. As a result, pupils learn how to express their feelings safely and they successfully adapt their behaviour.
- Staff support pupils well to access the school's local community. Pupils are involved in several fundraising initiatives with local charities. Consequently, pupils are aware of the key issues that people face in the local area.
- Risk assessments for pupils are appropriate and regularly reviewed by staff. They capture any key events so that staff can consider if it is necessary to make any changes or introduce new control measures.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Given pupils' starting points and complex needs, they make good progress in developing their conduct and self-discipline. Records show that incidents of poor behaviour have declined considerably over time.
- Some pupils attend learning off-site with alternative providers. Learning with alternative providers is well coordinated, and quality assured by leaders. Pupils' work evidences a wide range of academic and social skills that are developing during visits to the alternative providers.
- Levels of attendance have improved since the last standard inspection. This is because of the effective strategies that leaders have implemented to improve attendance since the previous inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils do not achieve strongly across the curriculum. Pupils' progress in English is variable across key stages. Some pupils do not develop the basic literacy skills to ensure that they can write to a high standard. Leaders have started work to address this. However, their initiatives have not yet taken full effect.
- Most pupils achieve well in mathematics. Some pupils go on to achieve success in national examinations and accreditations.
- In science, pupils make typically strong progress. For example, they have a thorough understanding of the importance of healthy eating, a balanced diet and exercise.
- Most pupils make good progress towards achieving their education, health and care plan (EHCP) outcomes. For example, innovative approaches are used to support the development of pupils' communication skills.
- Pupils achieve well in history. Work in pupils' books demonstrates their strong knowledge of the Industrial Revolution and the key events leading up to this. Their written work demonstrates a sound understanding of cause and effect.

Sixth form provision

Requires improvement

- Due to the weaknesses that run throughout the school and in the sixth form, some students are not achieving highly enough across their study programmes.
- In some lessons, the academic demands placed on students are not challenging enough. This is because sometimes learning has not been planned for the higher level of understanding the sixth-form students possess.
- All students can access work-related learning. However, this is frequently not relevant to their future work aspirations.
- Impartial careers advice is provided to all students in the sixth form. Students can attend careers interviews, local job fairs and local businesses. This supports them to make informed decisions about their futures.
- Outcomes data for the last academic year indicates that pupils are now achieving a higher number of academic and vocational qualifications. This successfully supports them in reaching their intended destinations.
- Almost all students who left the sixth form last academic year have progressed to suitable education, employment or training placements.

School details

Unique reference number	138408
DfE registration number	886/6139
Inspection number	10091651

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 special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Philip Hoppenbrouwers
Chair	Tom Kempin
Acting Headteacher	Richard Johnson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,682 to £50,407
Telephone number	0203 1373629
Website	www.pierviewacademy.co.uk
Email address	richard.johnson@alpschools.org
Date of previous inspection	7–9 November 2017

Information about this school

- Since the previous standard inspection, on 7 to 9 November 2017, the school's registration has changed to provide for up to 30 pupils aged 11 to 25.
- A range of local authorities place pupils at the school who have been previously permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion. All pupils have an EHCP, for autism spectrum disorder or social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

- The school makes use of three alternative providers: Meepa Gymnastics Club (Gravesend), The Archway Project (London) and The Intelligence Hub (Borough Green).
- The school is part of a group of three schools overseen by the same organisation, with one in Welling and another in Leicester. The group's head of schools has been the acting headteacher at Pier View since the previous headteacher left in December 2018. A new headteacher has since been appointed and is due to start work at the school before the end of term.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a range of individual and small-group lessons across all key stages. She also visited an alternative provider to observe pupils' learning. All these observations were carried out jointly with leaders.
- The inspector took account of the school's own evaluations of the quality of teaching, adults' assessments of pupils' outcomes and their evaluations of pupils' progress. The inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with a variety of people to gather their views of the school. This included pupils, parents and carers, staff, leaders, the managing director and the proprietor.
- The inspector considered three responses to Ofsted's online parents' questionnaire, Parent View, and one accompanying free-text response. Eighteen responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to the independent school standards and the quality of education, including a review of the school's website. She considered available reports of the most recent evaluations carried out by external agencies.

Inspection team

Emma Sanderson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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