

Inspection of Peak Academy

Drake Lane, Barton, Dursley, Gloucestershire GL11 5HD

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 June 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Some pupils say that they are bullied, for example through frequent name-calling. These pupils are not confident that staff will tackle this. Sadly, they simply accept that this is how things are. Adults' expectations are too low.

Leaders do not respond appropriately when pupils, parents or carers have concerns about incidents that happen at school. They delay reporting allegations to professional agencies. Leaders do not monitor safeguarding practices well enough. This puts pupils at risk of harm.

Staff often physically remove pupils from lessons, so that they can calm down. However, staff do not listen well enough to pupils' views about the impact that these physical interventions have. This creates anxieties for pupils as they try to make sense of events.

Pupils are rewarded for their positive attitudes on 'fantastic Fridays'. They find working towards these events motivating. Many look forward to enjoyable activities, such as go-karting. Pupils behave well and support each other when activities are well structured and interesting, such as during breaktimes outside. When learning does not meet pupils' needs and interests, there are frequent behaviour incidents.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, including those leading the trust, have not identified or acted on serious weaknesses at the school. Leaders fail to learn from safeguarding incidents. They miss opportunities to do all they can to ensure pupils' safety.

The school's curriculum is being improved and developed. Different subjects are at differing stages. To support pupils to learn the curriculum well, each pupil has an individual learning plan. The intervention manager has reviewed and improved these plans so that they now have relevant next steps. These are helpful as they link well to targets in pupils' education, health and care plans.

Teachers use individual learning plans to adapt the curriculum for each pupil. The plans also identify strategies that help pupils to learn successfully. Where this works well, learning is calm, relevant and purposeful. Disruptions caused by poor behaviour have reduced through the year, but still occur. This is particularly the case when learning is not matched well enough to pupils' needs. For example, pupils become unsettled when activities are too easy. In addition, some adults over-support learning, which can prevent pupils from developing resilience and independence.

Reading is rightly prioritised in the school. Staff have had appropriate training to support their teaching of reading. The school is resourced well with high-quality books. Teachers choose rich and diverse novels and encourage pupils to read these. Teachers also read to their classes and pupils enjoy this. Pupils who need to catch up have extra

phonics sessions to focus on reducing the gaps in their learning. Occasionally, tasks are not matched well to the phonics that pupils need to know. Assessment in writing is not yet effective. Teachers follow an agreed writing sequence of learning, but the curriculum does not ensure that pupils apply and practise what they have learned. Therefore, too few pupils achieve well in writing.

In subjects such as personal, social and health education (PSHE), teachers plan a suitably wide range of content. For example, to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain, pupils learn about the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. More needs to be done to ensure that this learning is understood and remembered by pupils.

The home-based learning provided for pupils following vocational courses in key stage 4 varies in quality. Some courses lack interesting and relevant content. However, during restrictions because of COVID-19 (coronavirus), staff provided appropriate support for pupils' learning. As a result, most pupils have completed their courses this year. Nearly all pupils in Year 11 have a confirmed place in a college to move on to in September 2021.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is a poor culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders do not take pupils' concerns about incidents that occur at school seriously. Records do not show whether physical interventions are necessary or proportionate. Leaders do not evaluate these incidents well enough.

The local authority does not have confidence in the school's ability to keep pupils safe. Sometimes, school leaders investigate concerns themselves, before seeking advice from the local authority. This could compromise an investigation and prevent appropriate and timely action being taken to safeguard pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The trust has not ensured that leaders at the school implement a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders do not manage allegations well enough. A lack of appropriate and timely reporting to the local authority could put pupils at risk of harm. Clear procedures for the management of allegations, that are well understood by staff and robustly checked by leaders, must be put in place urgently.
- There are too many incidents of poor behaviour in lessons that result in physical intervention from staff. Too often, interventions include dangerous moves, such as holding pupils to the floor. Leaders should review their approaches to supporting pupils' behaviour so that such interventions are no longer needed.

- Leaders do not ensure that incidents involving physical intervention are followed up appropriately. As a result, pupils do not feel safe, or confident that they are listened to. In addition, leaders do not scrutinise records of incidents. They miss useful learning that could improve safeguarding practices at the school. Leaders must make sure that there are rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate the interventions that take place.
- Some pupils say that they are bullied frequently at school. These pupils do not believe that their concerns will be acted on. Leaders should review their anti-bullying strategy and the procedures that they use to respond to bullying incidents, so that pupils feel listened to and safe.
- The quality of education is not good enough. The curriculum in some subjects is not yet planned so that pupils learn what they need to reach ambitious goals. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in each subject is well sequenced to enable pupils to gain the knowledge they need to succeed.
- Some pupils do not understand and remember important knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that subject leaders check that pupils learn, understand and remember the intended curriculum. This is especially important in PSHE so that pupils gain the knowledge and personal attributes they will need beyond school.
- Teachers do not use assessment effectively. At times, pupils are given work that does not match their needs. In particular, the content chosen can lack ambition and be too easy. This creates frustration for pupils. Leaders need to ensure that assessment information is used to inform what pupils learn next.
- Sometimes, pupils are over-supported during lessons. This reduces their opportunities to develop resilience and independence. Leaders should clarify the roles of additional adults so that pupils learn important skills that will equip them for future education.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138429
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10197079
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ninna Gibson
Principal	Richard Lewis
Website	www.thepeakacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	3 to 4 June 2015

Information about this school

- This is a special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). All pupils have an education, health and care plan related to their SEMH.
- The school uses five local registered alternative providers.
- This inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether safeguarding arrangements at the school are effective.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Several meetings took place with the principal. Inspectors also met with senior leaders and members of staff. Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of The White Horse Federation multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: PSHE, English and science. This involved talking to subject leaders about how the curriculum is planned, visits to lessons, looking at pupils' workbooks and talking to pupils about their learning.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the single central record. Several meetings took place with the designated safeguarding lead and other senior leaders. Inspectors also spoke to groups of pupils and observed pupils during breaktimes, lessons and transitions. There were telephone calls with several senior officers from the local authority, including the designated officer.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Costello

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paula Lahey

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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