

Inspection of a good school: Pendle Vale College

Oxford Road, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 8LF

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

Outcome

Pendle Vale College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils said that they are fortunate to attend Pendle Vale College. They described it as an 'all round good school'. They said that the school community is friendly and welcoming, and that pupils are tolerant of one another. Pupils insist that the school is a happy and safe place to learn. Pupils value the visibility of staff and the support that they provide.

Around the school, and in lessons, pupils behave sensibly. They are self-disciplined and respectful. Pupils said that bullying is rare. They described how assemblies help them to learn about different forms of bullying. Pupils are confident that there is an appropriate level of support in place to address any incidents of bullying.

Pupils benefit from an array of well-planned enrichment activities. For example, some pupils access a course in British sign language, while others relish the opportunity to become involved in the school production. Pupils are appreciative of their high-quality personal development lessons. They talked enthusiastically about the quality of the careers education that they receive.

Most teachers have high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Pupils benefit from the passion that teachers have for their subjects. Teachers ensure that pupils behave well and enjoy their learning. Most pupils achieve well.

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

Leaders, including governors, put pupils at the heart of every decision that they make at Pendle Vale College. In return, pupils attend school regularly, and they engage fully in their learning.

Leaders have implemented a broad and ambitious curriculum which ensures that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), progress well through their subjects. Leaders have successfully increased the proportion of pupils that are entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

suite of subjects. Staff ensure that pupils, and their parents and carers, understand the benefits of this suite of ambitious qualifications. As a result of leaders' work, the number of pupils in the current Year 10 cohort studying the EBacc suite of subjects has increased considerably.

Across the school, most subject curriculum plans show that leaders have thought carefully about the order in which to deliver topics and concepts to pupils. However, a number of these plans do not provide teachers with sufficient information about the exact knowledge that leaders intend pupils to learn. Nor do they always outline carefully enough the most appropriate activities to help pupils learn this knowledge. This means that teachers sometimes choose activities to deliver the curriculum that do not help pupils to learn in as much depth as they could. Leaders have secure plans in place to address these weaknesses, and the revised curriculum plans will be in place by November 2022.

Teachers use a range of appropriate assessment strategies to check on how well pupils are learning the curriculum. They use this information well to help pupils embed new knowledge and to address swiftly any misconceptions that may arise.

Leaders are passionate about ensuring that all pupils read fluently and often. To this end, they have put into place a range of strategies that successfully enable teachers to identify and support those pupils who find reading more difficult. As a result, these pupils are beginning to catch-up quickly and read with increasing fluency. Across the school, teachers encourage pupils to develop their use of subject-specific and generic vocabulary.

Leaders successfully identify those pupils with SEND. Teachers are furnished with appropriate information to help them adapt how they deliver the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Most teachers use this information successfully so that pupils with SEND learn the curriculum as well as their peers. However, there are a minority of instances where some activities provided by teachers lack the necessary ambition to help pupils with SEND successfully learn new subject concepts.

Leaders have established a calm and purposeful learning environment. Staff have high expectations for pupils' conduct. Therefore, pupils are typically polite and attentive in lessons. Learning is rarely interrupted by incidents of poor behaviour.

Pupils benefit from a carefully planned personal, social, health and economic education programme (PSHE). Pupils enjoy this aspect of their learning. They said that the PSHE programme is enabling them to develop their knowledge of issues such as democracy, social responsibility, and the legal system. Furthermore, it is helping to develop their confidence, resilience and ability to work with others.

Governors are holding leaders to account for the quality of education provided to pupils at the school. Leaders have taken action to support staff well-being. They have taken steps to ease staff workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are extremely knowledgeable about the potential risks that pupils face in the local community. They have appropriate systems in place to identify and support any pupil who is at risk of harm. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to provide pupils and their families with the timely help and support that they require. Leaders provide pupils with a personal development curriculum that enables pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe in a wide variety of situations.

Governors take their responsibilities for safeguarding seriously. They are appropriately trained and support leaders well. They are particularly proactive in working with parents and other members of the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Currently, some subject curriculum plans do not identify the exact knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn. As a result, some pupils do not build up a deep enough understanding of some subject concepts. Leaders are in the process of strengthening curriculum plans, and they must roll out the remaining plans fully within the next 12 months.
- On occasions, some teachers do not always choose the most appropriate activities to deliver the subject knowledge that they want pupils, including those pupils with SEND, to learn. This is particularly the case in those subject areas where leaders' plans do not outline learning activities that are most appropriate to deliver the intended curriculum. Consequently, some pupils, do not learn aspects of the curriculum as well or as deeply as they could. As they move ahead, leaders should ensure that all subject plans include activities that enable all pupils to gain an accurate and deep understanding of subject concepts. The transition arrangements were used on this inspection to confirm that pupils benefit from a good quality of education.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2012.

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 Ofsted 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.

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	134989
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10204441
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1076
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mohammed Iqbal
Headteacher	Oliver Handley
Website	www.pendlevale.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 December 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Pendle Vale is an average-sized secondary school.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, middle leaders and teachers.
- An inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also scrutinised the minutes of various governing body meetings.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art and design, English, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive,

inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered other curriculum areas, including history, mathematics and religious education.

- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leaders to consider the culture of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding, including leaders' pre-employment checks on staff. Inspectors spoke to governors, staff and pupils about wider aspects of safeguarding. They also considered survey responses from staff, parents and carers and pupils around safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, pupil behaviour, monitoring information, improvement plans and the self-evaluation summary.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including at breaktimes, in corridors, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about bullying and behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their programme of wider personal development, including the PSHE programme. An inspector also visited some of the additional enrichment activities on offer to pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire and the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Alyson Middlemass, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Claire Hollister

Ofsted Inspector

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