

Inspection of Pioneer TEC

Wallend Road, Preston, Lancashire PR2 2HW

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pioneer TEC is a nurturing and supportive place. Staff forge positive relationships with pupils. Pupils have access to a spacious outdoor area where they can use off-road motorbikes and all-terrain vehicles. This helps them to develop their driving skills. Pupils' learning is enhanced by a range of outdoor education trips and visits. They enjoy participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils take part in a wide range of clubs, including for cycling and boxing.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They told inspectors that they feel safe. Pupils said that bullying is not common. They are confident that staff would sort it out if it were to happen.

Leaders and staff have raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils and staff reported that pupils' behaviour has improved. Pupils generally behave well in and out of lessons. However, on occasions, some pupils disrupt lessons and use inappropriate language. This is not challenged well enough by staff.

Pupils enjoy learning a range of subjects, including food technology, music technology and motor vehicle maintenance. However, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects. This is partly because of weaknesses in the design and delivery of the curriculum.

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

Leaders have created a school where pupils feel listened to and valued. Staff work closely with each pupil when they start at the school. This helps to build pupils' self-esteem and reignites their interest in education.

Leaders are refining the school's curriculum. In some subjects, leaders identify the knowledge that they want pupils to learn and remember. Pupils are able to build on their prior learning. However, some other subjects are at an early stage of development. These subjects lack clarity about what pupils should know and remember. In these subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Some teachers do not use assessment strategies sufficiently well to check whether pupils have understood their work or to identify any misconceptions. As a result, some teachers do not have a good understanding of what pupils know and can do. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders identify the needs of these pupils quickly. They share information about pupils with SEND with teachers. However, some teachers do not make sufficient adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum in some subjects. This is because the curriculum design in some subjects is not fully established.

Most pupils have fallen behind in reading due to the significant gaps in their education. Leaders have introduced some initiatives to support weaker readers. For example, pupils receive additional support from adults. In addition, pupils are encouraged to read texts that interest them. Leaders' work is beginning to have a positive impact in developing pupils' confidence with reading.

Pupils typically show respect for staff. Some have experienced trauma in the past. This makes it hard for them engage with learning. Staff adopt a calm approach and help pupils settle into lessons. However, sometimes, pupils find it hard to manage their emotions. This leads to lessons being disrupted and pupils using disrespectful language. This is upsetting for others and spoils learning. Staff do not consistently tackle these instances of poor behaviour.

Typically, pupils attend school regularly. However, at times, the attendance of some pupils is sporadic. Leaders provide appropriate support for those pupils who are reluctant to attend school as often as they should.

Leaders have recently introduced a new programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. The relationships and sex education policy meets statutory requirements and is available to parents and carers on request. Pupils learn about democracy and the rule of law. They are taught the importance of respecting differences in others. However, some aspects of the personal development curriculum are not implemented consistently well. This includes learning about different religions and cultures.

Pupils have opportunities to develop independence and to be ready for adult life. For example, they are taught how to shop in local supermarkets. They also undertake work experience on the school site. Pupils enjoy making food at lunchtime every Thursday, which they deliver to staff within the school. This helps them to develop their social skills. Some pupils take on positions of responsibility, for example as junior instructors.

The proprietor ensures that the school meets all the independent school standards and the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The buildings are well maintained. A copy of the safeguarding policy is available on request. Leaders have established impartial careers advice for pupils. Some pupils have attended open days at local colleges. This is helping them to prepare for their next steps. The proprietor knows the school well and has appropriate plans to improve the school.

Staff are proud to be part of the school. They are positive role models and work effectively as a team. Staff said that the proprietor and leaders are supportive and considerate of their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know how to spot potential signs of abuse and what to do if they have any concern about a pupil's welfare. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to get pupils the help and support that they need. Handover meetings at the start and end of each school day ensure that information is shared well between care and education staff. Leaders regularly check the safety of pupils who sometimes attend another setting. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about risks to their safety, such as peer-on-peer abuse, drug abuse and radicalisation and extremism.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, subject leaders have not thought carefully enough about the knowledge pupils should learn. This means that teachers do not have the information they need about what should be taught. This hinders pupils' progress. Leaders should ensure that they finalise their curriculum thinking so that teachers are clear about what they should be teaching and when this should take place.
- In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment strategies well enough to check on pupils' understanding of previous knowledge. This means that they move on to new topics without knowing how much knowledge pupils know and remember. This hampers pupils' achievement. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively to identify pupils' misconceptions, so that they can build their knowledge over time.
- Some aspects of the PSHE education curriculum are not implemented consistently well. This limits how well pupils are prepared for their future lives. Leaders should ensure that the PSHE education curriculum is coherently designed and implemented, so that pupils are better prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Sometimes, pupils do not behave as well as they should. They occasionally use unacceptable language. This is upsetting for some pupils and it disrupts learning. Leaders should ensure that staff apply the school's behaviour policy in a consistent manner, so that pupils' behaviour matches leaders' expectations.

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

School details

Unique reference number	148056
DfE registration number	888/6123
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10210362
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	TRAX MX LTD
Chair	Eddie Sloane
Headteacher	Shaun Redgrave
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,500
Telephone number	01772 957391
Website	www.pioneertec.co.uk
Email address	eddiesloane@pioneertec.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the school's first standard inspection. The school was registered by the Department for Education on 28 January 2021.
- The school opened to pupils on 1 November 2021. The school aims to re-engage pupils who are not able to attend mainstream schools.
- The current headteacher took up post on 1 November 2021.
- The school buildings are situated in the centre of extensive open grounds that have been landscaped to accommodate tracks for activities such as off-road motorcycling and go-karting.
- Leaders work closely with a number of local authorities, including Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen, and Warrington. This is the main referral route for placing pupils at the school.
- The school is registered to admit up to 12 girls and boys, aged between 11 and 18. There are currently four Year 11 pupils on roll. All are looked after by the local authority.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Some pupils attend alternative provision, where they follow a vocational course for two half-days a week.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, subject leaders and staff. An inspector spoke with the chair of the proprietor body. An inspector held telephone calls with social workers and a representative of an alternative provider used by the school.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.

- Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. As part of this, an inspector toured the school's premises accompanied by school leaders.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents, such as school policies, risk assessments, school improvement plans, and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, PSHE education and motor vehicle maintenance. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gary Bevin

Her Majesty's Inspector

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