

Inspection of a good school: Penkford School

Wharf Road, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 9XZ

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 April 2022

Outcome

Penkford School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Penkford School work hard. They are happy in school and want to do well. Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that helps pupils to learn the knowledge and skills that they need in order to do well in life. They understand the needs of the pupils in the school and ensure that they achieve well.

Pupils understand how to stay safe and know that they can talk to any member of staff if they are worried. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and communicate these clearly. Pupils behave well in their lessons and breaktimes and when moving around the school. Members of staff are skilled at teaching pupils the skills that they need to help them behave well. Pupils explained that staff deal promptly and effectively with incidents of bullying.

Relationships between pupils and members of staff are positive. Leaders insist on a positive approach and believe in 'success every day'. Parents and carers said that the staff at Penkford School are amazing and that they have made a positive difference to their children's lives.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that meets the needs of the pupils in the school. The curriculum for most subjects, including mathematics and English, is well ordered. Subject leaders know what they want pupils to learn and teachers know the order in which to teach subject content. Teachers design activities based on what pupils have learned and use assessment strategies well to further build on this learning. This means that pupils achieve well in these subjects.

In a small number of subjects, the order in which pupils should learn new knowledge is not clear. As a result, some teachers do not know how to organise subject content to help pupils deepen their learning. This means that pupils do not learn some of the knowledge that they need to know in order to progress well through the subject curriculum. Subject leaders do

not know how well the curriculum is being implemented. Consequently, they are not able to support teachers effectively to help pupils to know and remember more.

Pupils make great strides when learning to read. This is because leaders have implemented a structured programme for learning phonics. Consequently, pupils can identify the key sounds that they need to know. Teachers' checks identify any pupils who have fallen behind. Skilled members of staff provide a structured programme to help pupils catch up. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Leaders have recently introduced a broader curriculum offer. This means that pupils have a greater choice in their studies than before. Pupils said that the careers advice and guidance that they have received have helped them choose the courses that they want to study.

Leaders understand the approaches that help pupils to behave well. Members of staff use these approaches effectively. This enables pupils to behave well in their lessons and throughout the school day. If a pupil becomes distracted, members of staff carefully refocus the pupil. As a result, pupils' learning is rarely disrupted.

The curriculum helps pupils to develop their emotional resilience and self-awareness. There is an extensive outdoor education programme which pupils are very enthusiastic about. Pupils take part in a local boxing project which encourages positive decision-making. They engage with local initiatives to eradicate anti-social behaviour. Pupils can discuss the skills and qualities that they have learned doing these activities.

Staff are proud to work in the school. They said that senior leaders are supportive and are mindful of staff's workload. Governors know their responsibilities and are committed to improving the school. They hold senior leaders to account and support the headteacher's priorities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed robust systems to identify the safeguarding risks that pupils may face. Leaders work very effectively with other agencies to support pupils. Leaders and members of staff help pupils and their families manage safeguarding risks. Staff are trained to understand how to identify concerns and report them. Pupils understand the importance of learning about safeguarding. For example, they know how to stay safe online and how to report any safeguarding concerns that they have.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the order in which pupils should learn new knowledge is not clear enough. This leads to pupils' learning not being built on as effectively as it

could be. Leaders and subject leaders must ensure that the curriculum for all subjects is well ordered.

- In a small number of curriculum areas, leaders do not have a clear understanding of how effectively their subject is implemented across the school. They are not able to support teachers in delivering some aspects of the subject to ensure that pupils know and remember more across the full curriculum. Leaders must ensure that subject leaders gain a deeper insight into how the curriculum is being implemented to make sure it is having the intended impact on pupils' learning.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2016.

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	104843
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10199644
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Neale
Headteacher	Anne Kyle
Website	www.penkford.st-helens.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 February 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All of the pupils who attend Penkford School have an education, health and care plan which identifies social, emotional and mental health needs as their primary need.
- The school will be moving to new premises in September 2022.
- Since the previous inspection a new headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed.
- School leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. This included discussions with leaders and teachers, visiting lessons, reviewing a range of documentation and looking at pupils' work.

- Further inspection activities included discussions with subject leaders, visiting lessons and looking at examples of pupils' work in other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with pupils, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead, the attendance and family support officer and teachers.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of parents on the telephone.
- Inspectors met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors observed pupils on their entry into school, during their lunchbreak, at breaktime and in assembly.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. This included examining the record of employment checks on school staff, and talking to leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector took account of responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, the pupil survey and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Martin Hanbury, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Claire Hollister

Ofsted Inspector

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