

Inspection of a good school: Penkridge Middle School

Marsh Lane, Penkridge, Stafford, Staffordshire ST19 5BW

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

Outcome

Penkridge Middle School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Penkridge Middle School provides a calm and friendly environment in which pupils thrive. Pupils feel happy and safe. They attend regularly and feel well supported by staff. Bullying is rare. On the occasions it does happen, it is dealt with well.

The school is ambitious for every pupil. Expectations are high. Pupils understand and respond well to these expectations. They behave well around the school and work hard in lessons.

Lessons are well planned, taking pupils' learning needs into account. Pupils enjoy learning and take pride in their work. They contribute thoughtfully to class discussions and show determination when completing independent tasks. Teachers use reward systems to recognise pupils' achievements. Pupils appreciate this. They talk enthusiastically about the rewards they receive and how these encourage them to improve.

The school offers an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Examples include sports, music, art, drama, dance and mathematics clubs. Many pupils take advantage of these opportunities. For example, over a hundred pupils are currently involved in rehearsals for the forthcoming school production, 'Shakespeare Rocks'.

Most parents say they would recommend the school. Several comment on the positive atmosphere, appropriate academic challenge and supportive pastoral system.

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

Leaders know their school well. They accurately identify the school's strengths and have clear plans in place to make improvements where they are needed. Governors and trustees provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to leaders.

The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. Leaders and trustees have thought carefully about the subjects pupils study. All pupils, including those with special educational needs

and/or disabilities (SEND), follow a broad and balanced range of subjects. Subject leaders work closely with local first schools and high schools to determine the content. This ensures that pupils cover the full national curriculum across key stage 2 and key stage 3.

Subject leaders and their teams have redesigned subject schemes of work. They have ensured that they are coherently sequenced and appropriately challenging. In most subjects, this is helping pupils to build and retain knowledge over time. However, in a small number of subjects, plans are not as advanced. Consequently, new learning does not always build effectively on what pupils already know.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to ensure that the curriculum is well delivered. Consequently, pupils build up their knowledge and understanding over time. Teachers frequently check pupils' understanding and give useful verbal and written feedback. Most pupils make use of this feedback to improve their work. However, occasionally, some pupils do not, or are not given opportunities to, act upon the advice they are given. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their learning.

Teachers are knowledgeable about pupils with SEND. They use their knowledge to adapt lessons so that all pupils can access the curriculum. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to ensure additional support is well targeted. Several parents of SEND pupils express concern that there is currently no permanent special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) in post. Leaders are aware of the issues this is creating. They have clear plans in place, including the appointment of a permanent SENCo from the start of the next academic year.

Leaders have a carefully planned personal, social and health education curriculum in place. Pupils explore areas such as cultural diversity, keeping themselves safe and planning for their future. Pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the school community. They respond well to this encouragement. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils have used their initiative to set up and run the school stationery shop.

All staff are proud to work in the school. They say that it is well led and managed and that leaders trust them. They feel that leaders consider their workload when planning improvements. Staff appreciate the professional opportunities on offer, including the opportunity to work with colleagues from other schools in the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have clear and effective safeguarding procedures in place, including making sure staff are safe to work with children. They ensure that all staff complete appropriate safeguarding training, supplemented by regular updates and reminders about policies and procedures.

Staff know their pupils well. They are quick to identify and respond to concerns. Staff work closely with families and other agencies to ensure appropriate support is in place when it is needed.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They are clear about what to do if they have a concern and trust their staff to give them the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of subjects have not given enough thought to the sequencing of what is taught. Consequently, on occasions, pupils find it difficult to recall and build on prior learning. Leaders should ensure that the essential knowledge that pupils will learn is clearly sequenced and ordered in all curriculum areas. Staff should make sure that pupils consolidate and develop their knowledge and understanding over time.
- Pupils' response to teacher feedback is inconsistent between departments. As a result, pupils do not always know and remember what they should. Leaders should ensure that pupils are always given the time and support to respond to teacher feedback, to develop their knowledge in all subjects.

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 predecessor school, also called Penkrigde Middle School, to be good in March 2017.

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

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| Unique reference number | 144206 |
| Local authority | Staffordshire |
| Inspection number | 10227802 |
| Type of school | Middle deemed secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 9 to 13 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | N/A |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 464 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | N/A |
| Appropriate authority | The academy trust |
| Chair of governing body | Mark Roberts |
| Headteacher | Andrew Grocutt |
| Website | www.penkridge-middle.org/ |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Penk Valley Academy Trust.
- The school uses part-time alternative provision for a small number of pupils at one alternative provision provider.
- The school works alongside local high schools to meet the requirements of the Baker Clause. This requires schools to provide pupils in years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the SENCo. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff, governors and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English and French. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited a range of other lessons and activities outside the deep dive subjects. These included: information and communication technology, music and geography lessons, literacy and numeracy support sessions and extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy, spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. The lead inspector spoke to the safeguarding leader about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors took account of the free-text comments and the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online inspection questionnaire. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Eddie Wilkes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gwen Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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