

Inspection of a good school: Pensby High School

Irby Road, Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside CH61 6XN

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 March 2023

Outcome

Pensby High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Pensby High School wear their uniforms with pride. The school values of 'care, respect and inspire' permeate all that they do. Pupils learn a great deal about tolerance, respect and how to treat each other in the right way. Pupils were unanimous in their view that everyone is accepted for who they are at this school.

Leaders have high expectations of what all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can and should achieve. Pupils achieve well.

In the main, pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. They are polite and courteous. Pupils value leaders' high expectations of their behaviour. They said that this helps them to feel safe.

Pupils spoke highly of staff. They appreciate how well staff care for them. Pupils were adamant that bullying and discriminatory behaviour are not tolerated. Leaders resolve any incidents of bullying swiftly.

Pupils have a strong voice. They value the opportunities that they have to work with leaders to further improve the school. Pupils develop into confident and articulate young people, ready to take their place in modern society. Pupils would readily recommend the school and said that it is a happy and enjoyable place to be.

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

Leaders have designed a well-thought-out curriculum across key stages 3 and 4 that supports pupils to build on their prior learning while addressing any gaps in knowledge from key stage 2. Leaders are passionate about ensuring that pupils experience a broad and rich key stage 3 curriculum. This sets pupils up well for the next stages of their learning.

In the majority of subject areas, leaders have thought carefully about the non-negotiable knowledge that sits within each unit of study. Leaders have carefully organised this content so that pupils can build their knowledge cumulatively. Across the curriculum, teachers are clear about what knowledge to teach and when this content should be taught. They routinely design learning that supports pupils to learn well.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to expertly introduce new concepts and ideas to pupils. Teachers skilfully select appropriate activities to deepen pupils' learning over time. Leaders' strong focus on subject-specific vocabulary is giving pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, the language and tools that they need to communicate effectively.

Pupils spoke confidently about their learning. They readily draw on what they already know, and they know what they need to do to improve. Leaders' assessment processes are effective in checking how well pupils are learning over time. However, in a small number of subjects, these assessment systems are less helpful for staff when determining how well pupils have learned important knowledge within a topic. This means that, on occasion, some teachers move on to new learning before pupils are ready.

Leaders are equipped well to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Staff are furnished with detailed information and guidance about these pupils' needs. This enables staff to support pupils with SEND to access the curriculum well alongside their peers.

Leaders have clear systems in place to identify pupils across the school who are behind with their reading knowledge. Skilled staff deploy a range of strategies to support these pupils to catch up quickly. Most pupils read with fluency and confidence appropriate for their age. This prepares them well for further study.

Leaders prioritise reading across the school. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of high-quality texts. They know that staff expect them to read widely and often. Pupils relish the opportunities that they have to practise their expression and intonation when reading out loud.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are determined to succeed. The calm atmosphere in classrooms means that pupils can learn without disruption. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are respectful. While most pupils attend school regularly, a small proportion of pupils do not attend as often as they should. These pupils miss out on important learning.

Leaders are committed to raising pupils' aspirations. For example, Year 11 pupils told inspectors that they are informed well about the different options available to them when they leave school, including apprenticeships. Pupils said that this is helping them to have greater choice over their future lives.

Leaders provide a strong programme to support pupils' wider development. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn about British values and democracy, for example through their roles on the school council. Pupils also benefit from a wide variety of extra-

curricular activities which enhance their learning of the curriculum. They appreciate the increased focus on how to look after their emotional and mental health.

Staff were overwhelmingly positive about leaders' support for their workload. Staff value the initiatives that leaders have put in place to support their well-being, for example health packages and family-friendly time. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders foster a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are fully cognisant of the procedures for keeping pupils safe. Staff know pupils well. They are alert to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff report their concerns about pupils diligently.

Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies. They are tenacious in ensuring that vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate and timely support.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum. They know whom to go to if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders' assessment processes do not check how well pupils have learned the knowledge within units of study. This means that, sometimes, teachers do not identify or address pupils' misconceptions quickly enough before moving on to new learning. As leaders further develop their assessment systems, they should ensure that these systems match the knowledge defined in the curriculum.
- A small proportion of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they miss out on important learning. Leaders should ensure that they support these pupils to continue to improve their rates of attendance.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2018.

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.

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	105101
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10256118
Type of school	Secondary modern
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	885
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Roger Henshaw (Co-Chair) Robert Row (Co-Chair)
Headteacher	Kevin Flanagan
Website	www.pensbyhighschool.org
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders make use of one registered and one unregistered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. An inspector spoke with three members of the governing body, including the co-chairs and vice-chair of governors.
- An inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and history. Inspectors met with curriculum leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited some lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11. Inspectors also observed pupils' movements around school.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding procedures and the checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation documents, the curriculum, minutes from meetings of the governing body and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Rachel Goodwin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kevin Sexton

Ofsted Inspector

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