

Inspection of an outstanding school: Pendle Community High School & College

Oxford Road, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 8LF

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 March 2024

Outcome

Pendle Community High School & College continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, are placed firmly at the heart of this welcoming and highly aspirational school. They thrive as part of a friendly and exciting learning community.

The school is relentlessly ambitious for pupils and students, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to challenge pupils and to celebrate each step of their learning, however small or large. The school's expectations are extremely high. There are no limits. Pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils are kind and supportive of each other. They appreciate the routines that the school provides and the rewards that they gain for their positive behaviour. Staff know pupils as individuals. They provide personalised and sensitive support that helps pupils to communicate their needs and regulate their own behaviour.

The school places a sharp focus on ensuring that all pupils are extremely well prepared for adulthood. Pupils flourish due to an extensive programme of activities and experiences that nurture their personal development. This equips pupils with the skills that they need to keep themselves safe and healthy, communicate effectively, and live their lives as independently as possible.

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

The school has meticulously designed specialist curriculum pathways that cater exceptionally well for pupils' specific learning needs. Some pupils are at the very early stages of development and cognition. The curriculum is expertly designed to focus on their engagement, communication and sensory needs. Other pupils study a wide range of discrete subjects at key stage 3. This prepares them well for the opportunities that are provided in key stage 4 and 5. It also means that they are well equipped to be successful when completing examinations.

In each subject, the school has thoughtfully identified and ordered the most pertinent knowledge that pupils should learn. This is broken down with clarity into small steps for each pupil, so that pathways for pupils' progression are clear.

The school ensures that staff have strong subject knowledge, as well as a detailed understanding of pupils' SEND needs. Pupils' prior knowledge is accurately assessed so that the delivery of the curriculum is skilfully matched to pupils' various starting points. Teachers make regular checks on what pupils know, remember and can do. They continually identify and address any gaps in knowledge. This helps pupils to make progress through the curriculum and excel in their learning.

Pupils' communication and reading skills have a high priority. Pupils who are non-verbal or in the very early stages of development, receive focused support using a wide range of resources such as sign language, story boards and assisted technology. For many, this is transformative. It allows them to engage with the world around them and make choices for themselves.

The school has introduced a new phonics programme with success. All staff have received training. They deliver the programme with expertise. Pupils read books that contain the sounds that they know. This is helping pupils to read with increasing fluency and confidence.

The school ensures that all staff model how to be polite, tolerant and respectful. Pupils rise to this expectation. The school environment is calm and productive. Pupils behave well and develop strong interpersonal skills that they apply with impressive confidence in a range of social situations.

The programme that the school provides to enhance pupils' wider development is exceptional and inclusive for all. For example, pupils enjoy international travel, residential trips and outdoor activities. There is an extensive range of clubs and activities including the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, dance, drama, sailing, football and singing to encourage pupils to explore their interests and talents. Pupils' understanding of the world is enriched by visiting speakers, trips to places of religious worship and museums.

Pupils are supported very well in preparation for their next steps when they leave school. There is a comprehensive and specialised careers advice and guidance programme. For example, the school has set up its own social enterprise so that it can provide real life work experience for post-16 students and develop their employability skills. All pupils progress into positive destinations when they leave the school.

The school is supported and challenged by an experienced governing body. They set an ambitious vision and work closely with leaders to ensure that the quality of education that pupils receive is continually improving. The school engages well with staff when making changes and reviewing practices so that they feel well supported and are able to manage their workload. Staff value the regular training that they receive so that they can carry out their work effectively as part of a strong and collaborative team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in October 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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	135015
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10256240
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Trevor Ashton
Headteacher	Debra Grogan
Website	www.pchs.lancs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils and students who have moderate and severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities and autism. Some pupils have serious medical conditions and complex multiple needs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, including early reading and communication, mathematics and computer science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about 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 also discussed the curriculum and visited a sample of lessons in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free text comments. An inspector spoke with some parents and carers who were visiting the school during the inspection for a school event.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They met with a range of staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. They met with a range of pupils from all year groups to gather their views about school life. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Amanda Downing, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Bather

Ofsted Inspector

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