



Penistone Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106653
LEA Barnsley
Inspection number 277601
Inspection dates 28 February 2006 to 1 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Jeremy Richardson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Huddersfield Road
School category	Community		Penistone
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Sheffield, South Yorkshire S36 7BX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01226 762114
Number on roll	1579	Fax number	01226 370328
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Cllr J Unsworth
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs C Gower

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	28 February 2006 - 1 March 2006	277601

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspector and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Penistone Grammar School, a specialist business and enterprise school, is a much larger than average mixed comprehensive situated in Penistone. There are 231 students in the sixth form. The proportion of the pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Very few of the pupils speak English as an additional language and the proportion of the pupils designated as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There are major deficiencies in parts of the accommodation.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Penistone Grammar is an improving school that provides a satisfactory standard of education. Standards are above the national average. The progress the pupils make has improved and is satisfactory overall. The school is tackling the inadequate progress the pupils made in Key Stage 4 in English in 2005 with some degree of success and knows that there is more to do. The higher attaining pupils do not always do as well as they should, including in English and mathematics. This is because their teachers do not always set them work which is challenging enough. Teaching is satisfactory overall and there is some good practice. However, the quality of marking is too variable. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the site. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is above the national figure. The curriculum has been revised and is now good. In particular, the school has used its specialist status well. Arrangements for care, guidance and support are good. In particular, the school has established, and continues to develop, a good system for assessing the pupils, setting them targets and checking their progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and has introduced a good range of new systems to the school. However, some of these, particularly line management, have not yet been implemented with enough rigour to ensure that good practice is shared across the school.

The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory and developing. There is a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses on which the school has based good plans for further development. There has been a range of improvements since the last inspection, including: the behaviour of the pupils, arrangements for managing the performance of the teachers, systems for checking the work of the school, support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Plans for building a new school are well advanced. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory with good features, as the school rightly judges. Standards in 2005 were just above average, representing satisfactory achievement in relation to the students' starting points. Subject results vary considerably and middle attaining pupils make slower progress than others because the quality of teaching is inconsistent, although satisfactory overall. Students' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are good. Students are happy and secure and most develop into confident and articulate young adults. Nearly all who start in Year 12 continue to the end of Year 13 and the number of pupils who go on to higher education is impressive. The range of courses open to the students is good, as are the extra curricular opportunities. Senior managers know the sixth form well and manage it effectively. Established partnerships with the careers service and higher education establishments support students in their progression routes when

they leave. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection with significant improvements to the breadth of the curriculum and study facilities, for example.

What the school should do to improve further

The school knows what needs to be done. In particular, it should focus on:

- raising levels of achievement especially in English and for higher-attaining pupils
- improving the proportion of good and better teaching
- implementing line management systems with greater rigour so as to secure consistency and spread good practice across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school having achieved a little above average results in their primary schools. Results in the national tests at the end of year 9 in 2005 were similar to those achieved in 2004 and are above the national average overall. There was a marked improvement in standards in English but a decline in the science results. Although the school reached its target for English, it failed to achieve its targets for mathematics and science.

The proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grade passes in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations in 2005 was lower than in the previous year. Standards are above the national average overall. However, too few of the pupils achieved the highest grades (A and A*) in English and mathematics. Pupils performed particularly well in French, geography, history and physical education. The school missed its targets.

The progress the pupils make across the school has improved and was satisfactory overall in 2005. Nevertheless, pupils made inadequate progress in English and below the expected rate of progress in mathematics. Changes to the curriculum and staff training have started to improve progress in English. It is now satisfactory. This overall picture masks variations between key stages. In Key Stage 3, progress was above the expected rate, particularly in English where there has been a marked improvement. Pupils made reasonable progress in Key Stage 4 but, in English and mathematics, progress was below the expected rate. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made reasonable progress.

Standards in the sixth form in 2005 were lower than in 2004 and a little above the national average. Progress was satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are generally proud of their school, most enjoy school life and attendance is good in all year groups. Most pupils show good attitudes to work in lessons. They respond well to teachers' questions, collaborate well in pairs and small groups and do their best when working on their own. Good quality relationships with adults and

amongst pupils ensure that learning takes place in a business-like and supportive atmosphere. Pupils' behaviour is generally good in lessons and elsewhere. There is some bullying, mostly teasing and name calling primarily in Years 7 to 9, but pupils confirm that incidents are taken seriously and well handled, once reported to adults.

Pupils' moral and social development is good. Spiritual and cultural development is generally satisfactory, but their preparation for life in a multicultural world is underdeveloped. Pupils are effectively encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. They make a valued and growing contribution to the life of the school, through year and school councils, Year 10 peer mentors and Year 11 prefects. The school has been exceptionally effective in providing its pupils with a wide range of business and workplace skills, aided significantly by its specialist status in business and enterprise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors' visits to lessons and discussions with students confirmed the school's judgement that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Very good classroom relationships promote good behaviour and willing learners. Pupils listen and collaborate well, and try hard to complete the tasks they are given. However, sometimes pupils comply with instructions without thinking independently why they are doing particular tasks.

In the best lessons, pupils enjoy the variety and challenge. Teachers aim questions at individuals, framing them to draw out understanding. They leave space for pupils to reflect, and exploit the new interactive whiteboards to make pupils more active.

Less polished teaching provides a secure grounding for basic qualifications, without stretching the most competent pupils in every lesson. Some of the higher attaining pupils in Year 11 and Year 7 said that some of their work was too easy. Questioning does not explore pupils' understanding sufficiently. In some cases, pupils are largely observers as teachers tell or show them what they need to learn. There is too little discussion or exploration of ideas, and in some lessons, too little is asked of pupils so that although they behave well, they are not really engaged or interested.

Although teachers assess specific pieces of work carefully to track pupils' progress, day-to-day marking is inconsistent. Too much work is marked superficially, so that pupils do not know what they need to do with their current task to achieve their target grade.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets national requirements and is much improved from the last inspection. It is well matched to the needs of most pupils although the school is not yet systematic enough in taking account of the needs of the higher attaining pupils.

Improved and now good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make satisfactory progress. Skilled learning support assistants and mentors effectively support pupils' increasing self esteem and academic achievement. The most vulnerable learn important life skills in the welcoming 'Bungalow'.

The school encourages healthy and safe lifestyles through well established programmes for personal, social and health education and citizenship along with a good range of extra curricular activities that pupils praise.

Impressive attention is paid to pupils' future economic well-being. The recent national Arcadia Award for 'Outstanding Collaboration with Business' is a first class illustration of how specialist status has helped the school to become a valuable community resource.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Nearly all pupils feel safe and well cared for. Where individual pupils are experiencing personal and other difficulties, pupils confirm they are well supported, particularly by the school nurse and learning mentors. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are well established. The Student Support Centre plays a very positive part in preventing exclusions and in improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school.

Support for pupils' learning is good. Progress is reviewed regularly and pupils are involved effectively in reviews. The quality of the targets that pupils are set is generally good because they help pupils improve their attitudes to work as well as telling them what the next steps in their learning are.

Induction is handled well in Year 7, with most pupils settling quickly into school. The school has effective ways of identifying the needs of the minority who experience some difficulties. A good programme of careers guidance is well supported by the local community and the Connexions service. Year 11 pupils rightly consider that the advice and guidance for course and career choices are appropriate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Governance is satisfactory. There are some good features, including the close oversight of the improvement in provision for the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the work done on improving the health and safety of the site.

The headteacher provides good leadership and management. She gives a clear sense of purpose and has made a good start on raising expectations, establishing good systems and managing the performance of the teachers. She has tackled difficult staffing issues with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. She has launched a developing professional dialogue about teaching and learning. She knows the school well and has worked hard to build links with the community, including through the school's specialist status, and to secure new buildings.

Senior managers are aware of their responsibilities and share the headteacher's vision for the school. Nevertheless, some of the school's systems, including for line management, are not always implemented with sufficient rigour and not enough guidance is always given to middle managers. Consequently, the effectiveness of some of the school's policies, including on marking, is too variable. Middle managers are starting to make a contribution to improvements as they develop the requisite skills and understanding of their roles. Although some have yet to secure consistency in their areas, others have played their part in leading developments, especially in history, geography and physical education. The leadership has made a good start on involving all staff in the drive to raise achievement.

The policy for checking the work of the school is satisfactory. It sets clear expectations and provides a well considered calendar of activities. Senior staff have started to collect systematically information about the school's performance. They have a sound picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school on which they have formulated good plans for further developments so that all pupils achieve as well as they can.

The school spends its money wisely and is served well by its business manager. It is staffed with appropriately qualified teachers. Plans for a new building are well advanced and funding has been secured.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do.

These are the main strengths of your school.

- Your school is improving and is satisfactory.
- Mrs Gower is a good headteacher and, with her team, has improved the school.
- The progress you make has improved and is generally reasonable because the teaching is satisfactory.
- You enjoy coming to school and behave well around the site and in lessons.
- You told us you feel safe because the school dealt well with any bullying.
- The specialist status of the school has had a very positive effect.

Your school needs to:

- improve the progress you make, especially in English and for the cleverest pupils
- make more of the teaching exciting and challenging
- keep a closer eye on subject departments so that everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet and best practice is shared.