



# Pent Valley School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118930  
**Local Authority** Kent  
**Inspection number** 280437  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Patricia Metham HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)	<b>School address</b>	Surrenden Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Folkestone
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		CT19 4ED
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01303 277161
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1385	<b>Fax number</b>	01303 279342
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	191		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	John D Barber
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mario Citro
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 February 2002		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	6–7 February 2007	280437

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pent Valley School is a mixed 11–18 secondary modern school. Standards on entry are just below national averages, with relatively few higher attaining students. In 2003 it gained specialist technical college status and in 2004 became Kent's first full service Extended School. The school has three sites: the main campus, the playing fields and other outdoor provision for physical education, and an annexe used for work-related learning and Extended School activities. The headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, its performance in some respects is inadequate: the curriculum and the extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles and are prepared for their future economic well-being. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that it has made in remedying these weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days' notice of such a visit.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has acted with energy and focus to communicate and begin to implement his positive vision for the school. His strategy for developing leadership and management at senior and middle levels is already having a perceptible impact. Supported by the school's governors and the local authority, he has shown an ability to drive changes through, both in the school's systems and in its ethos. There is evidence of raised expectations, effective tracking and student support. At the start of the year, he led a timely review to establish priorities for change. Some echo issues raised in the last inspection report, for example the need to raise attainment and disseminate good practice in teaching. So far, the focus has been on improving achievement and standards, teaching and learning, each of which are satisfactory. Although students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall, effective coordination and monitoring have not yet been established for these or for the curriculum. The range of opportunities on offer does not fully meet the needs and interests of the students and the school's programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is not as comprehensive as it should be. The school recognises this and is committed to improving these areas; two appointments have been made to strengthen the leadership team's capacity to implement better provision for students with additional educational needs and to coordinate the currently satisfactory care, guidance and support for all students.

GCSE and equivalent results in 2006 were slightly better than in 2005 but the number who gained five or more A\*-C grades including English and mathematics was still below national levels. After analysis of recent results both at GCSE and in the Year 9 national tests, the school has implemented a cross-curricular strategy to improve literacy. It is too soon to judge how effective this is.

Students like the school and feel safe. They are confident that their concerns are taken seriously and that their voice is heard by the school management. Those following vocational and work-based courses speak enthusiastically of their experience; however, many students leave without the literacy, numeracy and information technology qualifications needed as a basis for future employment.

Specialist technology status is supported by the school's enterprising approach to information and communication technology (ICT), including courses such as animation. As an Extended School, Pent Valley is a good centre for many community activities.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Students with a wide variety of previous attainment are welcomed and student numbers have been rising steadily. Although sixth formers contribute well to their school, for example through peer mentoring, they have too few opportunities to take responsibility.

Teaching is satisfactory. Students believe they are well supported by their teachers and can approach them for help at any time. However, not all lessons offer adequate challenge or develop independent thinking. Standards are satisfactory, currently falling just below national averages. English AS level results in 2006 were better than predicted but performance fell below expectations in six subjects and the average points score per student was lower than in 2005. There is a high drop-out rate in Year 12, partly because a number of students leave to take up employment locally, benefiting from their work-related learning in Years 10 and 11. Most sixth formers make satisfactory academic progress and become mature and confident young people. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, offering a broad range of subjects to higher achieving students, but there are too few options for those who need further help to acquire sound basic skills or who want pursue vocational courses. The school is aware of it and is planning to meet this need. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum and other activities better match the range of needs and interests of all learners.
- Raise standards in English and mathematics so that students are well prepared for their future employment.
- Ensure that the PSHE programme covers all aspects of personal development and well-being.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are currently satisfactory across all year groups. There has been a slow upward trend over the past four years. In comparison with similar groups nationally, students' attainment at the school has improved significantly. In 2005, standards in English, mathematics and science across Years 7 to 9 were within national averages. Data for 2006 and results in Year 9 national tests in 2006 show mathematics and science exceeding targets but English dropping below them.

GCSE results in 2006 were slightly better than in 2005. The number gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent was 45% and 22.8 % gained five or more A\*-C grades including English and mathematics. These results were below national levels. Results for ICT at GNVQ Level 2, taken by 25% of Year 11 students, made a positive contribution to the overall result. The school has set challenging targets for

2007 and has produced evidence of progress towards them. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Students' performance in post-16 qualifications such as GNVQ, AS and A level is satisfactory.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most students enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons but not always as they move around the school. Some students and parents are concerned about the impact of low level disruption by a few on the progress made by others; in discussion, students linked standards of behaviour to the quality of teaching. The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is less than satisfactory. Although students speak positively about improved arrangements for healthy eating, in the canteen only a minority regularly takes advantage of them; most prefer less healthy snacks and this contributes to litter around the school. Clubs and extracurricular activities are popular, although only about 25% of students regularly choose to take part in sports despite sponsored access to Pent Valley's leisure centre. The school's self-evaluation indicates that too many students are still not taking an active part in physical education lessons but no effective action has been taken to tackle this.

Where there are opportunities to take responsibility students rise to the occasion, as shown in the work of the pupil mentors. The school parliament deals with serious issues; for example, whether teachers and students are observing the school's behaviour policy.

Attendance is satisfactory. Students say that they feel safe and are confident that the school takes their concerns seriously and deals effectively with the relatively few incidents of bullying.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

A thorough review of teaching and learning at the beginning of the year has determined priorities for professional development, focusing on learning objectives and appropriate activities to achieve them that are matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Evidence from the lessons observed and departmental documentation indicates that there is now a more consistent approach to lesson planning following action taken to remedy weaknesses identified earlier in the year.

Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and guide students' learning carefully, generally consolidating learning at the end of lessons when students evaluate their

progress. They use national curriculum criteria and GCSE grade descriptions to assess students' levels of attainment accurately, to give feedback and to set work that will give students scope to achieve higher levels. So far this has had variable success. Where conscientious attention to school policies and guidelines is suffused by flair and creativity, students respond very well. Students in Year 11 are being thoroughly trained in examination technique and there is well-directed support for borderline students. Regular assessment and tracking of progress support the school's ambitious GCSE targets for 2007. Not all lessons, however, provide sufficient challenge and pace for the most able. The school recognises that underachievement by higher ability students, especially boys, needs to be tackled and there is evidence that this is now being done through targeted support and monitoring. Teachers generally make effective use of ICT to promote learning and some good examples were seen of students using the interactive whiteboards to display their progress at the end of a lesson. On the whole, teachers manage their classes well and establish relationships and an atmosphere conducive to learning. Pupils respond amiably, applying themselves to tasks set. Students are not given enough opportunities for active participation in learning and independent thinking.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school does not have a coordinated and monitored PSHE programme. While there is effective provision for work-based learning and an increasing range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, time spent on placements cuts into core curriculum time for some students. Too many are inadequately prepared for the world of work as they leave the school without qualifications in literacy, numeracy or ICT. There are too few opportunities for students to take initiative and develop skills in leadership, teamwork and practical problem-solving. In the sixth form, there is a restricted range of options for those not aiming for academic or higher level vocational courses. The school's specialist technology status, however, is supported by enterprising ICT programmes, both within the school and in local primary schools. For example, Pent Valley's annual video conference with Father Christmas is hugely popular with primary children. Extended services make a positive contribution to the range of activities available to students outside the school day.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Key tutors for each year, form tutors, learning mentors and non-teaching student managers ensure that students' pastoral needs are met satisfactorily. Those with disabilities, for example hearing or sight impairment, are well integrated within the school community. There is, however, no member of the leadership team monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and coordination of different pastoral support roles and the school cannot at present demonstrate that it is meeting national requirements

for PSHE. A senior appointment has just been made to cover this, with effect from the summer term. The same applies to provision for those with additional educational needs.

Constructive links between pastoral care and academic guidance are developing but are still in their early stages. Students are aware of their long and short term targets, which are regularly reviewed on target-setting days and continually in lessons. In addition, sixth formers benefit from 'Aim Higher' guidance. Students feel confident that their concerns and needs are given serious attention. Some frustration has been expressed by parents over sketchy or belated communication between school and home, especially regarding their children's progress. Since the start of the year, a more assertive behaviour policy has led to a large number of fixed-term exclusions but the number is now falling and student responses indicate that the policy is having a positive effect.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

When he took up his post at the start of the year, the headteacher created an entirely new management team. His promotion of middle managers into senior leadership has given career development to capable staff; they are happy to be identified with and help to implement his vision. One area for concern is the degree to which the headteacher himself is the organising force for school development and management; there is currently no deputy headteacher or member of the leadership team ready to take on whole school leadership. There is, however, strong capacity for effective leadership within the senior team, which is still being developed. The same is true for those new middle managers who are effectively cascading the headteacher's vision into their subject area. However, best practice is not consistent across and within departments.

So far, leadership and management have been directed primarily towards raising standards and improving teaching and learning in all years. A detailed audit in the first term confirmed the headteacher's view that student progress was being inhibited by low expectations and pockets of unsatisfactory teaching. With his leadership team, he has instituted a tightly managed cycle of subject review, holding subject leaders accountable for the quality of teaching and learning in their area. There is evidence that this is having a positive impact. There has not been comparable monitoring of the curriculum and key aspects of students' personal development. The governing body and school leadership are aware of this and steps are being taken to strengthen management of these areas.

The school has a sound picture of how well it is doing and what needs to be improved. Together with the recent changes, this demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.



**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	4	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	3

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

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I would like to thank you very much for the friendliness and openness you showed my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking with many of you and are grateful for the way in which you shared your thoughts with us. In return, I would like to tell you about the inspection findings. It has been good to hear you speak positively of the ways in which your headmaster and teachers have made it easier for you to learn efficiently and to know that you are generally happy to come to school. Yours is a satisfactory school. We have suggested that your learning and personal development will be even better if your interests and your individual needs are fully matched by the curriculum and other activities, so that you achieve your full potential. We have asked the school to make sure that when you leave you have reached standards in English and mathematics that will make it easier for you to become financially secure in the future. We have also asked the school to ensure that there is a PSHE programme that covers all the key aspects of your personal development, such as safety and good health.

With very best wishes for the future,