



Penn Hall School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104417
Local Authority Wolverhampton
Inspection number 286936
Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007
Reporting inspector Frank Price

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Vicarage Road
School category	Community		Penn
Age range of pupils	3–19		Wolverhampton WV4 5HP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01902 558355
Number on roll (school)	80	Fax number	01902 620335
Number on roll (6th form)	24		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	J Giles
		Headteacher	A Stoll
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2003		

Age group 3–19	Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007	Inspection number 286936
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Penn Hall School caters for children, pupils and students with physical difficulties and a wide range of learning needs. These range from severe to moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school has a small residential unit, which is used by up to six pupils, who board between one and four nights each week. In September 2005, the school gained specialist status for sensory and physical specialisms. The school runs an outreach service for pupils in mainstream schools. English is a second language for a small number of pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Penn Hall School is a good school with some outstanding features. The school has a very positive atmosphere, which encourages and motivates pupils to achieve as much as possible. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy their schooling. Relationships between staff and pupils are exceptionally good and contribute to pupils being happy and confident. Many voice their appreciation of the school. One pupil summed up his feelings saying, 'This school is perfect'.

The teamwork of staff is superb and links with other agencies are very strong so that obstacles to pupils' learning are reduced enabling pupils to make good progress. The specialist status the school has achieved has allowed it to develop technology extremely effectively so pupils can maximise their independence. Through the outstanding use of both high- and low-technology devices, pupils are gaining more independence and are able to overcome their physical difficulties to learn and communicate more effectively. For example, pupils control equipment, such as doors, lights and television, in their environment through the use of switches. One pupil using the latest eye-scanning technology was able to produce good quality word-processed work in a much shorter period of time.

Standards are exceptionally low because of the nature of pupils' learning difficulties. However, through good teaching and a good imaginative curriculum, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and this is successfully built upon throughout the school. By the time pupils leave school, they achieve well in a wide range of qualifications. Progress is good in wide range of subjects, but is particularly strong in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

The excellent care, support and guidance provided for pupils and the high quality residential provision contribute strongly to pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils make great gains in becoming more independent, mature and well-rounded young people. They develop healthier lifestyles through choosing nutritious food and eagerly participate in after school activities such as wheelchair football or swimming. Some pupils represent their sports, such as Boccia, at regional and national levels.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and his supportive, committed senior management team work well together to secure improvements. However, the school's self-evaluation procedures lack rigour. Not enough use is made of assessment information to show how well all different groups of pupils progress or how this compares with pupils in similar schools nationally. As a result, the school has an overly optimistic view of the progress that pupils make.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision for students in the sixth form is good. Students are well prepared for adult life through a good range of academic and vocational courses in which they can achieve

national qualifications. The most able students achieve GCSE qualifications. All students achieve an accredited award in a wide range of courses including entry-level certificates, silver and bronze level awards in the Award Scheme Development and Network (ASDAN) and Duke of Edinburgh Award. Students' independence is promoted very well through college courses.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 8

The residential provision is excellent. The school offers high quality care for pupils. The last inspection report carried out by the Commission for Social Care Inspection was extremely positive, with all standards being met and some exceeded. Pupils enjoy their overnight stays and have access to a wide range of activities such as after school clubs or using facilities in the local community. There are good arrangements for pupils to complete their homework and very effective hand-over arrangements. The residential provision makes a very strong contribution in promoting pupils' independence skills, maturity and developing their social skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more accurate and rigorous self-evaluation procedures, through the analysis and use of school based and nationally available assessment information, so that the progress of all different groups of pupils can be demonstrated more clearly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are exceptionally low because of the nature of pupils' learning difficulties. However, from low starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Foundation Stage children get off to a good start. Communication, language and number skills merge seamlessly with programmes that support their physical development and independence skills. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils continue to make good progress. Pupils are confident in communicating, either verbally or through alternative methods, such as symbols or electronic devices, to make their views known. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 go on to achieve well in a range of accredited academic and vocational courses. The highest results are gained in physical education (PE), because activities are very well adapted to their needs enabling them to succeed. One pupil, for example, made exceptional progress and achieved A* at GCSE level. Pupils make very good progress in meeting their identified objectives in their individual education plans, which are challenging, reflecting the high expectations of staff for pupils to achieve. The majority of pupils meet whole-school targets at the end of each key stage. However, the school is not able to demonstrate clearly enough, progress made by different groups of pupils in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils are enthusiastic, determined learners who enjoy school and work hard to succeed. Developing pupils' independence is paramount and this contributes to pupils learning to achieve and promotes their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils appreciate healthy eating and exercise, with several pupils achieving notable success in sport. Pupils delight in additional activities such as horse riding, choir, art and music clubs. Having tea or 'sleeping over' at the residential facility are eagerly anticipated.

Pupils feel safe and secure and state that bad behaviour or bullying are rare. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and this is seen in pupils' good friendships, respect, tolerance and racial harmony. Their participation in the school and wider community through sporting and performing arts events is excellent. Pupils from the Nursery onwards have real responsibilities as citizens in the school council meetings, devising playground rules and making suggestions how to make school even better. Older pupils set an excellent example to younger ones, demonstrating maturity in sharing and listening to each other's views. Students about to leave feel well prepared for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils make good progress through good teaching, which captures pupils' imagination. ICT is used exceptionally well to enhance lessons. For example, interactive whiteboards are used to present ideas in creative ways and the Internet is used well by pupils to discover information on topics, such as the significance of religious holy days, developing their research skills. Lesson planning is detailed to ensure that the needs of pupils are fully met and support staff are carefully deployed, ensuring that pupils' independence is maximised. Lessons are well paced and stimulating and this impacts positively upon pupils' enjoyment of learning. Where appropriate, teachers are skilled in using alternative methods of communication, such as signing and using photographs to help pupils both to understand and communicate more effectively. Teachers are adept at removing barriers to learning. A striking example of this is in PE, where activities are adapted superbly to allow pupils maximum participation. For example, in one lesson, crossbows had been modified so pupils could fire them safely and accurately. The use of precise assessment procedures, for teachers to measure more accurately pupils' small steps of progress, has been introduced but is in the early stages of development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and is very effective in promoting pupils' good progress and enjoyment of learning. Planning to ensure that all pupils' needs are met is good. The enrichment of the curriculum is excellent. For example, the creative partnerships the school has established incorporates a wide variety of experiences, such as working with artists in residence, using the school woodland trail or the playground exceptionally well to bring learning to life. There is a very good range of activities at lunchtime and after school, such as performing arts, sports and holiday clubs and this contributes very well to pupils' overall enjoyment and helps them to be active. The use of technology, so that pupils can access learning, experience independence in mobility, and make themselves known through synthesised speech devices, is outstanding. This does much to promote pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. The school has some restrictions on providing enough work experience placements that can cope with the nature of pupils' physical disabilities. It is investigating ways to broaden its work experience to give more students a taste of real work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support of pupils are exceptional and very much based on teachers' skilled knowledge of pupils' individual and often complex needs. Medical and other support agencies are used well to the maximum benefit of pupils. This strong teamwork enables pupils to settle quickly and resolve any difficulties which may impact on their learning. Staff have high, yet realistic, expectations for pupils' learning and personal development and pupils respond very well to these expectations.

Pupils have relevant academic targets for literacy and numeracy and most know what they need to do to improve. Independent living is promoted very well in the residential unit, with pupils planning menus and choosing activities. Pupils have great confidence in staff and readily share any concerns they may have. They benefit from excellent levels of supervision, and procedures to promote their safety are thorough. Pupils are well supported so that inclusion into mainstream schools and colleges is successful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and management team work extremely well together and have set a clear vision for the school's development. The governing body, which has achieved an award for governance, is very knowledgeable and provides a good level of both support and challenge to the school. This strong

partnership ensures the school has good capacity to improve the quality of its work even further. The improvements in the school's accommodation, outdoor facilities and the outreach service are good examples of its determination not to be complacent. The outreach service is very well managed and successfully supports pupils with physical disabilities in other schools. The achievement of specialist status for sensory and physical specialisms has been successfully managed and is beginning to have a positive impact upon pupils' personal development and learning through the very effective use of technology.

Some aspects of the school's self-evaluation procedures are underdeveloped. Assessment information is not used sufficiently to measure how well all groups of pupils make progress, or to compare how well pupils achieve in similar schools. This also makes it difficult for the school to demonstrate clearly the progress that pupils make over a period of time to enable it to make accurate judgements on the progress of pupils.

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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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	NA
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
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?	1	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
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	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school recently. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us so freely.

We were very impressed with how good your school is. It was obvious to us how much you enjoy school, how well you are maturing and encouraged to be as independent as possible. You are making good progress in your learning; many of you use technology exceptionally well to help you in lessons and your communication skills. Your teachers are very skilled at helping you, and everyone in the school works together well to ensure that you receive good support and are well cared for. You are taught well and everyone is expected to do their best and you rise to this challenge. You are given varied and imaginative sporting, musical and creative experiences and this adds enormously to your enjoyment of lessons. Many of you said how much you enjoyed staying in the residential facility and we were very impressed with this. Your headteacher and all the staff are doing a very good job in ensuring the school continues to be even better.

To make your school even better we have made just one suggestion. The school should have a clearer picture of just how well everyone is doing, by making better use of information to measure your progress more carefully.