



Pensby High School for Boys: A Specialist Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105100
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287125
Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Jean Kendall HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Irby Road
School category	Community		Heswall, Wirral
Age range of pupils	11–18		Merseyside CH61 6XN
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	0151 6482111
Number on roll (school)	723	Fax number	0151 6483128
Number on roll (6th form)	112		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr G Sale
		Headteacher	Mr Phil Sheridan
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	21–22 November 2006	287125

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Pensby High School is a smaller than average school for boys aged 11 to 18. It has been a specialist sports college since September 2004. The school is classed as an all ability school, although the area is selective at age 11. As a result of the parental preference system, the school draws from a range of primary schools in a wide geographical area. The majority of students are from areas of low social and economic deprivation, although about 10% are from more disadvantaged areas. There are fewer than average students entitled to free school meals. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, although there is a higher than average proportion of students who have statements of special educational need. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Two students are at an early stage of English language acquisition. There are four looked-after children. The school makes joint sixth form provision with the adjacent girls' school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pensby High School for Boys provides a satisfactory quality of education with some good features: it gives satisfactory value for money. The school is improving under the strengthening expertise of the recently appointed headteacher and the restructured senior leadership team. Together with highly committed middle managers, they are improving the culture for learning and raising expectations of what students can achieve. The impact of improved leadership is beginning to show: specialist sports college status has been successfully achieved; results in Year 9 examinations are improving and the results at the end of Year 11 in 2006 were the highest to date. There have been significant improvements to the curriculum in Key Stages 4 and 5. Staff, parents and students remark on the improved atmosphere in the school in recent years. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the capacity for further improvement is good.

Further improvement is needed to ensure that students make even progress across the school. Although there is some really good teaching there is not currently enough to drive on all students' learning, especially at Key Stage 4. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently developed to ensure consistently good quality of provision. More able students do not always achieve the standards they are capable of because some lessons do not provide sufficient challenge.

Students say that they enjoy coming to school and their behaviour and attendance are good. They particularly enjoy the improved sports facilities and have welcomed the school's promotion of healthy eating and lifestyle. The school has made good use of its specialist sports designation to motivate students to achieve well across the curriculum and develop leadership skills. Opportunities for students to contribute to the wider community apart from sport are more limited. Provision for students' future working lives is satisfactory.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The day-to-day running of the sixth form is efficient. Students enjoy their education and show maturity and commitment to their studies. The retention rate is good. Standards are improving but they remain below average overall. The quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory with good teaching in some subjects, such as business studies and vocational options. The joint curriculum offered by Pensby Boys School and the nearby girls' school gives students a good choice of courses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all students, especially the more able, learn effectively and make better progress.
- Raise standards at GCSE and in the sixth form.
- Strengthen the arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning, spreading good practice and widening the range of teaching and learning methods.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' achievement is satisfactory and is improving due to the better processes in place to set targets for students and to provide support for those who are underachieving. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, although there are fewer than average high attaining students. In Key Stage 3 they make consistently good progress in English and science to achieve standards that are above average. Achievement in mathematics has been less consistent but unvalidated 2006 results show improvement, with students achieving above average standards.

Standards at GCSE have been below average up to 2005 but are now starting to build on the good progress students are making at Key Stage 3. Unvalidated 2006 results indicate considerable improvement which brings the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE in line with the national average for boys.

Achievement in English and mathematics has also improved but remains below average. The progress students make at Key Stage 4 is broadly satisfactory based on their previous performance but there is variation between subjects. Students make good progress in science, business studies, design and technology, music and drama. However, students' progress could be better in mathematics, geography, history, citizenship, media studies and information and communication technology (ICT).

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive good quality support. More able students do not always achieve as well as they might because some lessons are not sufficiently challenging.

Standards in the sixth form are improving but remain below average. Students achieve well in Level 2 courses, but as in Key Stage 4, there is variation in students' progress between subjects at AS and A2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Moral and social development is particularly strong but some opportunities are missed to develop spiritual awareness both in assemblies and in registration periods. Students say that they enjoy school and this is reflected in their very good attendance and clear enthusiasm for the extra-curricular activities on offer. Revised measures to ensure appropriate behaviour are popular with students and have proved effective. Behaviour is good and students say they feel safe and that bullying is effectively dealt with. The number of fixed period exclusions has fallen sharply this term. Younger students are appreciative of the help provided by peer mentors and of the helpful induction procedures provided by the school. Students' self-esteem is benefiting from the increasing number of opportunities to grow into

responsible adults and care for others. The school has made good use of its specialist sports college status to develop leadership skills and students have taken the Healthy Schools agenda to heart. They were influential in the installation of the heavily used fresh fruit machines and have adapted their eating habits to the new school menus.

Students' personal development in the sixth form is generally good and they show maturity and commitment to their studies. However, their capacity for independent learning is not well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students make good progress in lessons where they are actively engaged in challenging tasks and are able to interact with each other. They enjoy active lessons such as physical education which reflects the school's sports college status. Students make less progress in lessons where there is an over-emphasis on teacher-led activities, teacher talk and the over use of work sheets. In some of the satisfactory lessons observed there was low-level disruption as a result of the lack-lustre teaching and the lack of variety in learning activities which did not engage or challenge all learners sufficiently. Parents are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching, although a few commented that some lessons lack challenge, as was found by inspectors.

The majority of learners know their learning targets and the progress they are making. This is because, in the best lessons, teachers assess the progress of students effectively and provide a variety of interesting activities well matched to students' needs and capabilities. Teachers use lesson objectives to review and consolidate learning and effective questioning identifies weaknesses and strengths in students' knowledge and understanding.

Over the past two years there has been an influx of new teachers and some internal changes to staffing. These changes have improved the quality of teaching and learning through effective use of ICT to support teaching and a wider range of teaching and learning methods in some lessons. Training for staff on assessment for learning and recent systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching has also started to have an impact in lessons.

The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory and good in some subjects such as vocational options and business studies. Students are not sufficiently encouraged as independent learners and consequently when they reach the sixth form they do not always achieve as well as they should.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. The national strategy has been influential, especially in improving staff's capacity to provide for the differing needs of learners. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now much better suited to the needs of all students in Years 10 and 11, due to the addition of vocational and work-related elements. The school has reviewed its policy on allocating students to GCSE options and, as a result, more students are doing the subjects they like. This is an excellent example of putting the needs of students first. Staff already notice an improvement in the engagement and responsibility of learners in Years 10 and 11, but the impact of the changes is not yet reflected fully in students' examination results. Participation is particularly good in the wide range of sports clubs.

The sixth form curriculum is good and students have a good choice of courses. The significant proportion of Level 2 and Level 3 courses provide a good match to some students' needs. As a result, the retention rate is high and a growing number of students are studying a mixture of academic and vocational courses.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and contributes to students' improved self-esteem and ability to achieve. The majority of parents are very supportive of the school and recognise recent improvements. They say that their sons are well cared for and support for academic achievement is much improved. Recently introduced procedures to monitor performance, set targets and track progress are starting to take effect and quicken the pace of learning. Support is well matched to the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress is effectively tracked and regularly reviewed.

All required procedures to ensure health and safety, including those for child protection are in place. All students speak highly of the transition procedures for younger students when they transfer from primary school.

The school is working hard to improve its careers advice to older students and sixth form students. It is beginning to put systems in place to encourage learners to look at all levels of work opportunities and experience.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The leadership of the new headteacher and his able deputy has been inspiring in the past two years. They have created a very clear sense of direction that is now shared and owned by staff. The senior leadership team is highly influential and provides coherent messages for staff. Middle managers rightly talk of being encouraged and challenged by senior leaders. Since the previous inspection, the effectiveness of leadership and management has been transformed for the better.

The school has good capacity to improve further. The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas that need to improve. The use of data is now a strength among senior and middle managers, including pastoral leaders. Performance management is well established and has a positive impact on the staff's capacity to contribute to wider school improvement. Whilst there is a significant amount of monitoring of teaching, the quality of the monitoring lacks consistency and does not put enough emphasis on students' learning or improvement areas.

The contribution of the governing body is good. Governors provide a good level of support and challenge for the school, based on a clear and accurate grasp of its strengths and areas for improvement. They take difficult decisions where necessary and are effective partners in the school's longer-term development.

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good, helped by important support from senior school staff in terms of introducing change to the curriculum and other aspects of provision. The changes are beginning to improve the quality of provision and students are making better progress. However, the improvements have not yet impacted fully on standards and some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning remain.

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?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ 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	2	2

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	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	3

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 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	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

Thank you for welcoming us into Pensby High School and sharing with us your views about your work and life in the school. Those of you we talked to were helpful and polite and are a credit to the school.

You told us that the atmosphere of the school has improved in the last two years and we agree. Mr Sheridan and the staff have worked hard to improve your learning environment and provide you with good care, guidance and support. We were impressed with the way you are working with your teachers to improve behaviour. We thought you behaved very well whilst we were in school and found that you get on well with your work and with one another. Your school is a friendly and safe place and many of the younger students said that they appreciate the support of older students. We like the way you are using the improved sports facilities to keep active and healthy and the way you have supported healthy eating initiatives.

You are rightly proud of the progress you make in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the improved GCSE results in 2006 – the best the school has ever achieved. The improving results in the sixth form are promising but not all students are making the progress they could. We think you could go on to do even better if the teaching is better matched to your needs. You told us that you enjoy many lessons but that some are less challenging and you find it hard to concentrate. You can help by taking more responsibility for your own learning, and we have asked your teachers to bring about improvements which will make these lessons interesting and enjoyable and provide you with greater challenge.

We wish you a happy, healthy and productive time at Pensby High School for Boys.