

Penistone Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106653
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	324437
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1552
Sixth form	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Gostelow
Headteacher	Ms J Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2006
School address	Huddersfield Road Penistone Sheffield South Yorkshire S36 7BX
Telephone number	01226 762114
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average comprehensive school. It has a sixth form which some of the students finishing Year 11, and some from other schools, join. It serves an area that is less disadvantaged than typical and the proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is below the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below the average. The very large majority of students are of White British heritage. The school has specialist status for business and enterprise. The school has several awards, including Sportsmark, Artsmark (Silver), Investors in People, Kitemark for Enterprise Education and is a Football Association Charter School. Several leaders have been appointed to the school since the previous inspection, including the headteacher and a deputy headteacher.

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 School's effectiveness is satisfactory overall and improving. Pastoral aspects are strong, with good care and support helping students to develop well personally. There are other positive features, such as links with the local business community and the quality of enterprise education developed through the school's specialism. Academic provision and students' achievement are satisfactory. The school is improving quickly, however, because of good leadership and management. The school's senior leaders have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and are taking incisive and effective action to tackle the latter. This is escalating the rate of progress within the school and demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

Despite the size of the school, students are well known to staff because there are effective systems in place to ensure regular communication. Students' views are sought on matters of personal concern and on wider developments. As a result, students know there are adults who they can turn to with any worries or ideas and feel confident to do so. Students with additional needs receive specific and well-targeted support to help them participate in and benefit from what the school offers. Students enjoy school and demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning. Their attendance is above average. They have good relationships with each other and are courteous and friendly. Behaviour is good. They make an outstanding contribution to their own and the wider community through the varied range of opportunities made available for them to do so.

Students enter school with standards that are above the national average and they reach above average standards by the age of 16. Their achievement is satisfactory. In recent years their progress has been uneven. It has been good in some subjects but students have not made sufficient progress in English and mathematics. Due to the significantly improved monitoring of students' progress over the past year, which enables better identification of those who are underachieving, and the targeted action taken as a result, the picture is improving. Standards are rising at both key stages, including in English and mathematics, although achievement in mathematics remains a weakness. The quality of the curriculum and teaching are both satisfactory and action is being taken to improve them so that students learn more effectively. Some teaching is good, but information about students' progress is not used in lessons to match work closely enough to students' needs. As a result, work is not always at the right level of difficulty and not enough students reach their challenging, but realistic, targets.

The headteacher, since taking up post, has provided strong leadership; by for example, developing and implementing an ambitious programme for improving the school. Along with the deputy headteachers and well supported by other senior leaders, she has communicated an extremely clear vision of what the school can and should achieve. Leadership skills at all levels, including among students, are being systematically developed. Students of all ages are increasingly involved in deliberations and decisions about key developments.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students who join Penistone sixth form have GCSE scores that are broadly in line with those nationally. They pursue a largely academic curriculum and on average study a greater number of A levels than most students nationally. This results in students securing high points score

which, alongside good guidance and support from teachers, contribute positively to ensuring the large majority of students get into their first choice of university. The proportion of students in Year 12 who moved onto Year 13 last year was uncharacteristically low. The school's improved monitoring and tracking systems show that this is likely to improve significantly and match more closely the good retention rates within Year 13. The curriculum meets the needs of students who choose to continue their studies in school. The positive partnership with a local college provides careers paths for students who do not remain in the sixth form. Opportunities for students to get involved in enrichment and extra-curricular activities are numerous and this adds to their good personal development and well-being. Students speak positively about their experiences in lessons and appreciate the development of their independent learning skills. This is as a result of good teaching and learning. Data arising from the improved systems for tracking students' progress are beginning to result in effective action to improve achievement. However, they have yet to be fully and systematically analysed and used to ensure maximum impact on raising standards. Good leadership and management and evidence of successful intervention in the recent past indicate a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in mathematics.
- Ensure a greater proportion of students achieve their challenging targets.
- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in ensuring teachers make more use of information about students' progress to ensure work is well matched to their needs and is at the right level of difficulty.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the past, students have achieved better in Years 10 and 11 than earlier in the school. The school's latest information indicates that standards at the end of Year 9 are rising. They are now well above average in English. Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 4, but they are rising. GCSE results in mathematics have not been high enough and there has been widespread underachievement until very recently. Students' progress in the subject is improving, although is still not as it should be. Attainment in the school's other specialist subjects of business studies and information and communication technology is strong. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers, due to the targeted support they receive. Actions taken to improve boys' performance which is generally below that of girls are beginning to bear fruit. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done to improve achievement. Too many students do not yet reach the challenging, but realistic, targets that are set for them, and too few reach the very highest GCSE grades across all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Cultural development was a weakness at the last inspection and has improved since then, through, for example, successful links with a village in Zambia. A multicultural celebration event involving the local community is imminent. Students eat healthily and adopt healthy lifestyles. A significant number participate

in the varied programme of extra-curricular and school sports activities and some are taking sports leader qualifications. Students say they feel safe and they adopt safe practices. They are supportive of each other and collaborate well, although opportunities to work independently or in groups are limited in some lessons. Students are developing effective leadership skills which are helping them make a very strong contribution to life within the school and local community, such as through the school council, organising seasonal events, raising money for charity and working with local businesses on a variety of projects, including work-placements. The extensive links with businesses are helping students develop very good enterprise skills which contribute to them being well prepared for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. While there are some good and outstanding lessons the quality is not consistent and there are particular weaknesses in mathematics. In most lessons teachers are clear and explicit about what they want students to learn so students understand what is expected of them. Positive relationships and classroom management result in students working hard and doing what is asked of them. Students particularly enjoy the better lessons because tasks are designed to promote their active involvement and develop their independent learning skills. In many lessons, however, teachers do not make enough use of information about how students are progressing to ensure work is challenging enough for individuals across the ability range, especially the more able. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to work independently. Most books are marked regularly and some teachers give helpful advice on how students can improve their work and reach their targets, but not all do. Students are aware of the levels at which they are working, but are less sure of how to reach higher levels. Specialist status makes a significant contribution to teaching and learning by promoting the teaching of enterprise skills across a range of subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and is being developed to better match the full range of students' aspirations and capabilities. At Key Stage 4, the mainly academic curriculum is being widened to incorporate more vocational opportunities. In Year 7 a 'Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills' programme has recently been introduced which is improving students' confidence and literacy, but the skills learnt are not applied consistently in other lessons. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is appropriate and targeted to their individual needs. There are high levels of participation in the wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Through the specialism, students are given outstanding opportunities to take part in enterprise activities. The provision of activities outside of the school day for students and the local community are well developed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of pastoral care is good. There are well-developed systems to ensure all students are supported as individuals. Successful links with a wide range of external services ensure that

specialist support is provided where necessary to help those with additional needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Safeguarding, child protection and health and safety arrangements meet requirements. Procedures to promote regular attendance and positive behaviour are effective. The school now has good systems in place for assessing and tracking students' progress. The resulting information is being used well at a strategic level to determine where additional support or action is necessary to tackle underachievement, but it is not yet used routinely in lessons to ensure that students receive sufficient regular and specific academic guidance. Students receive good support to help them settle into school in Year 7. Guidance about future career and education opportunities is wide ranging and ensures that a very large majority of students continue with their education or move into employment on leaving school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A new leadership structure has been introduced since the last inspection and responsibilities of leaders at all levels have been clarified. There is an increasing emphasis on promoting accountability and providing the support necessary to ensure that middle leaders and staff carry out their roles effectively. Some middle leaders talk of being stimulated and motivated by the demands being made of them because they feel part of a supportive team working towards shared goals. While some of the developments underway to improve practice generally and to tackle specific weaknesses are at relatively early stages, they are already having a positive impact. Governors are well informed about the school and hold it to account by questioning and challenging it. Increasing efforts are being made to promote equal opportunities to ensure that all students achieve well academically and personally and play a full part in school life. Community cohesion is promoted well. There are very good links with external organisations, especially local businesses, reflecting the impact of the specialism. The school is now making wider links, such a planned visit to Africa by a group of students. Most parents who made their views known to inspectors were positive about the school. However, a minority expressed some concerns, especially about the inconsistency of teaching and quality of communication with them. The school is working hard to improve both of these areas.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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 learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Penistone Grammar School, Sheffield, S36 7BX

Thank you for being so welcoming during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you. I would now like to let you know the outcomes of the inspection.

We judge that your school's effectiveness is satisfactory for Years 7 to 11, and it is good in the sixth form. There are also some good features in the main school, such as the way you are cared for and supported and the way you develop personally. We also judge that your school is improving quickly, because its leaders are doing a good job. They have a clear and accurate understanding of what needs to be done to make it better and they are taking the right steps to bring this about.

Although Penistone is a large school, there are good systems to make sure that you are well known as individuals and that there are staff you can turn to with any worries. As a result, you told us that you feel safe. Extra support is given to those of you who have additional needs which helps you participate in school life. You told us you enjoy school. Your attendance is certainly above the national average. You have good relationships with each other and behave well. You make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community, because you have lots of opportunities to take responsibility and give your views and ideas on developments.

You enter school with above average standards and reach above average standards by the age of 16. Your achievement is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. You are set challenging targets but we think more could be done to help you reach these, so we have asked staff to give attention to this. You haven't been doing as well in mathematics as in other subjects and we have asked the school to improve standards and achievement in mathematics. The curriculum and the quality of teaching are satisfactory, although teaching is better in some lessons. We have asked teachers to make more use of information about your progress to ensure work is well matched to your needs and is at the right level of difficulty for you all. Specialist status is having a positive impact on your learning.

You can contribute to improving your school by continuing to work hard and trying to meet your targets, and by joining in the wide range of activities provided for you.