

Pendle Community High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135015
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	341599
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Kath Halifax

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Trevor Ashton
Headteacher	Mr Paul Wright
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
School address	Pendle Vale Campus Oxford Road Nelson BB9 8LF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eighteen lessons or parts of lessons taught by eighteen different teachers. Further time was spent looking at students' records of achievement, work books, and information about students' progress. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, and other professionals and looked at the school's review of its work, the current development plan, minutes of the governing body meetings, and documentation to ensure that students are safe. The responses to 62 parental questionnaires were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether teachers now have sufficient expertise to ensure that students with more severe and complex needs fare as well as their classmates
- whether the provision in the sixth form (College) now enables students to achieve as well academically as they do in their personal development
- how effectively support staff contribute to students' learning.

Information about the school

The school caters for students with a wide range of needs including emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate, severe, profound, and complex learning needs, and pupils with autism. Almost all have a statement of special educational needs. At nearly a half, the proportion of students with medical needs is increasing. Over three quarters of the students are of White British background. Virtually all others are of Pakistani origin, and speak English as an additional language. One third of students are known to be entitled to free school meals. A higher than usual proportion is in the care of the local authority.

The school moved to a new site in 2008 and is now co-located with Pendle View Secondary School. It has received a number of awards, particularly for sport and inclusion, as well as an Excellence Award for Innovative Practice.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that provides good value for money. In addition to improving the quality of education, leaders have efficiently managed the move to new premises, putting to right faults and omissions in the building to provide facilities that match the needs of students. Furthermore, they have won over parents who were vehemently opposed to students with the most profound needs being part of a large secondary school.

Students make good progress in learning because of good teaching and a good curriculum. Teachers, support staff and health professionals work very well as teams furthering the learning and inclusion of students of all capabilities. For example, to ensure students with communication needs play a full part in lessons, all staff and students are learning to sign. However, the use of signs and associated symbols, along with a picture exchange system is not consistent. Teachers conscientiously draw up individual education plans to target gaps and the next stages in students' learning. These are used well in lessons, but on some occasions, the targets are too broad and not easily measurable. This limits their effectiveness. Students receive excellent care, support and guidance. Work with health professionals and a first rate programme for students' personal and social development is seen in their remarkable grasp of keeping healthy, and in their contribution to the school, local and wider community.

Leaders have proved themselves well since the last inspection. Despite a significant cut in finances because of a change in funding, they have raised students' achievement, as well as ensuring high quality resources, such as providing laptops and equipping the sensory room when the planned funding did not materialise. Leaders are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Determined not to stand still, plans are well advanced to become a specialist sports college. The skill and enthusiasm of staff gives it good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make better use of signs, symbols and picture exchange to improve the communication of those students with the greatest communication needs.
- Ensure that targets in individual education plans reflect smaller, more easily measured steps.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Though students' successes are mostly in very small steps, taking account of individual

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starting points, their progress is rapid. They show remarkable concentration and determination. Students love to work independently, but are equally happy working with others, taking turns, problem solving and building confidence. They benefit from the imaginative activities provided. For example, students in Year 7 were enthralled while extending their understanding of coastal erosion as a mock-up of the 'sea' eroded the 'cliffs' causing 'houses' to fall onto the 'beach'. Equally, students are exuberant when they achieve a new skill, as was seen in the joy on a student's face in hydrotherapy when floating on their back for first time, exclaiming, 'I did it Miss, I did it!'

The progress of students with more severe and complex needs has accelerated because staff now have a better understanding of how to address their needs. Consequently, there is no significant difference in students' achievement by gender, need or ethnicity. While school data has identified inconsistencies in the rate of progress of students in Key Stages 3 and 4, much of this can be attributed to variations in prior assessments which are now being rectified. In addition to ensuring the skills of students with degenerative and life limiting conditions are maintained, staff strive to make their experiences fulfilling, while being ever conscious of their well-being. The co-location with a main stream secondary school is beginning to pay dividends for the more able students, leading to awards such as GCSE in information and communication technology (ICT) and BTec in sport. All students now leave with national qualifications.

Most students have settled extremely well on the new site. A very small number are still apprehensive when walking through the shared areas. Students in Years 7 and 8 take full advantage of the project, 'equal partners' throwing themselves into activities such as gardening and hip-hop dancing with their mainstream peers at lunchtime. Some older students in Years 10 and 11 say they feel left out as few joint social activities are available to them. Students make a tremendous contribution to the school, local and global community. Especially impressive is their excellent work at a nearby nature reserve, creating a first-rate outdoor classroom for use by primary and secondary schools as well as the public. Other projects have received national recognition and they are making a real difference in people's attitude to disability. Students have an excellent understanding of the importance of keeping healthy, knowledgeably making healthy choices in their life style. As a result of excellent support from medical professionals, students with chronic health needs are managing their condition exceptionally well. Attendance is broadly average, with most absences being attributed to long term illness.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved because of good quality professional training, especially for support staff and in working with students with more complex needs. Adults make good use of real objects and experiences to make learning meaningful. For example, in history, students increased their awareness of the slave trade through music, and 'sailing' in a boat between England, Africa and America. Staff are enthusiastic and imaginative, making links to other subjects, and to students' social development wherever possible. This was so in an English literature lesson where students expressed their thoughts about how a character might be feeling as they entered the 'tunnel of truth'. Systems to assess and record students' achievements are good, though leaders have identified the need to refine those in ICT and science.

The curriculum has many strengths, especially in its flexibility to provide individual learning programmes for each student. The provision for physical development and the expressive arts is good. Students in Years 10 and 11 are able to choose between different subjects. However, this has resulted in a single choice between ICT or the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. While this allows students to acquire skills such as Junior Firefighter, it means some of the current Year 11 will leave without a recognised qualification in ICT. Although this is being addressed for the next year it disadvantages the current cohort. Excellent use is made of the extensive grounds, for example, investigating plants and their habitats.

The pastoral care students receive is exceptional. A philosophy of 'the team about the child' ensures that each student receives high quality support. Working with health professionals, leaders are doing all they can to ensure students with chronic medical

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conditions attend whenever they can. The input from health and other professionals is significant and combines particularly well with the expertise of staff. The initiative to work with a behaviour therapist helps students come to terms with the problems they face, and has been especially comforting for staff, students and their families in difficult times. Students with English as an additional language receive very good support from staff within the school, enabling them to celebrate their cultural heritage.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are clear and unyielding in their pursuit of a quality provision. Through good professional training of staff they have raised students' achievement and learning. Leaders are reflective and not afraid to speak their mind. Under the far sighted leadership of the headteacher, they have continued to move forward despite continual upheaval through reorganisation and the move to the new accommodation. Challenging targets have been set for students of all capabilities and the aspirations of students and their families have been changed. The school development plan is clear how success will be achieved using the skilled workforce to best advantage. Partnerships with other schools are good. Excellent links have been established with the primary special school. Joint training and planning have resulted in a smooth transition for students and continuity in their learning. Links with the co-located secondary school are developing satisfactorily.

Governance is good. At the time of the inspection, good policies and procedures were in place to ensure adults have an in-depth understanding of safeguarding students as well as a good awareness of how the many medical conditions make students even more vulnerable. Furthermore, adults ensure older students who use social networking sites at home are fully aware of internet safety. The school is a cohesive, harmonious, outward looking community. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. Staff endeavour to include all students in all activities. However, despite considerable spending from the school budget to provide power driven doors to ensure access for wheelchair users, a major disappointment is that the main shared entrance still does not meet requirements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Under the good leadership of the new manager the College provision has improved considerably since the last inspection. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that those who stay for one year have the same opportunities to gain awards as those who complete three years. The range of awards has been extended and is now appropriate for all capabilities, though work in ICT for students with the most severe needs is not accredited. Nevertheless, students' academic progress is now good and on a par with their personal development. Students partake in all activities with energy and enthusiasm. From the start of the day keep fit session and in lessons, they give of their best. Students are justifiably proud of their 'mini-enterprise activities' reporting that initiatives such as the production of greetings cards and the 'Easter Eggstravaganza' have enabled them to make generous donations to charity. Numerous curricular activities, links with community and taking lunch in the main school refectory prepare them well for their move to further education or employment.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

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Views of parents and carers

Almost a half of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Most had very positive comments about recognising and meeting the needs of individual students, caring staff and multi-agency work. Inspectors agree with the parents' and carers' comments. A small number expressed concerns about issues which affected individuals. These were investigated and found to be being addressed. Quite a few mentioned their child's vulnerability in such a large school. Inspection findings show excellent care is taken to ensure that while students gain as much independence as possible, none are put at risk.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pendle Community High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 127 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	58	24	39	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	46	74	15	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	66	17	27	1	2	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	48	27	44	3	5	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	39	63	17	27	2	3	3	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	61	18	29	3	5	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	60	19	31	3	5	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	61	19	31	2	3	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	65	17	27	3	5	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	61	18	29	3	5	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	55	22	35	1	2	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	43	69	15	24	1	2	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	66	15	24	2	3	3	5

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Pendle Community High School, Nelson, BB9 8LF

You may remember that a little while ago, a colleague and I spent a short time looking at your school. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us. We enjoyed talking with you and visiting your lessons. I especially enjoyed eating lunch with you. It was clear from our chats and the questionnaire replies we received from your parents and carers that you enjoy school.

We believe that your school is providing you with a good education. As well as working hard, you have fun in lessons and your work at the nature reserve benefits the community as well as your school. You are very well behaved and work very hard. This means that though your progress is in small steps, it is good given your starting points. All this happens because you have good leaders and teachers. You are especially well cared for, particularly those of you who have medical problems.

There are a couple of areas that would make your school even better. We have asked your teachers to:

- use more signs and symbols in lessons and around the school
- be more precise in the targets you are set in your individual education plans.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Katharine Halifax

Lead inspector

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