

Pendle Vale College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134989
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	360667
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Shirley Gornall HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	961
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr John David
Headteacher	Mr Steve Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 37 lessons taught by 38 teachers. They held meetings with leaders and managers, teachers, support staff, groups of students, governors, the headteacher of the co-located school and a representative of the local authority. They looked at a range of documents and scrutinised students' work. Inspectors reviewed 351 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 173 from students and 69 from staff.

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

- The rate of students' progress and whether it is improving securely and quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching and whether it is strong enough to sustain the improving picture of attainment.
- The extent to which the systems and structures developed by the school since the previous inspection are robust and rigorous.
- Whether students arrive punctually to school and to lessons.

Information about the school

Pendle Vale College is an average-sized secondary school serving the community of Nelson. It opened in 2006 under the Building Schools for the Future reorganisation in Lancashire and moved into new purpose-built premises in September 2008. Around half of the students are from minority ethnic groups, mostly Pakistani, and the large majority of these speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, although the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The school has recently gained Specialist Sports College status and holds awards including Healthy Schools and Investors in People.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pendle Vale is a rapidly improving school. Strong strategic leadership provides an effective framework through which to deliver sustainable improvement. Provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is securing better outcomes for students. Attainment has been low but is now rising and students' progress in learning is improving securely. Their achievement is satisfactory. A culture of high expectations of what students can achieve is promoted by leaders at all levels. Students respond well to what their school offers and speak enthusiastically about their experiences there. The school is enjoying greater stability since moving on to its vibrant new campus, described by a community member as, 'a beacon of ambition for the future.' The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's education.

Teaching is good and the school's unrelenting focus on improving its quality is having an impact on students' achievements. Over the last three years students' progress has been inconsistent but satisfactory overall. The quality of students' learning in lessons has improved and is now good. In the lessons observed during the inspection students' progress was accelerating at a good rate. Most students met their learning objectives; understood the levels at which they were working and could explain what they needed to do next to improve their work. School data shows that the majority of students are now well placed to achieve challenging targets. This is a school that knows its students well, understands their interests and capabilities and encourages them to achieve their best. Some students have weaker literacy skills, evident in their speaking and writing, and teachers are not always consistent in how they address these. The school's curriculum is supported by well established partnerships and enables students to make appropriate choices tailored to meet their needs. There is a high rate of student progression into further education and training. Careful tracking of students' progress is contributing to improved standards. On occasions, the quality of marking is not always as good as it could be, particularly in helping students to develop improved spelling, punctuation and sentence structure.

An exciting extra-curricular programme is well attended and the school is using its specialist status to open up new opportunities for students, including through the provision of popular accredited courses in sport. Relationships between members of the school community are harmonious, characterised by mutual respect and good behaviour. Students feel very safe in school. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality has improved markedly since the last inspection. The school works closely and effectively with a wide range of agencies to provide support packages for students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Students appreciate the good quality of care and guidance they receive and the school can demonstrate that this has

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an impact on their achievements. Safeguarding is given a high priority by the school; the safeguarding policy is clearly stated and rigorously followed.

The school has excellent financial management practices and ensures that its resources are well maintained. Its improved outcomes for students represent satisfactory value for money. Robust self-evaluation throughout the organisation, strong leadership and a clear commitment by the whole school community to the motto, 'Think Pendle Vale: Think Achievement' mean that the school is well placed to make future gains.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that good progress is a feature of all lessons by:
 - making sure that there is appropriate pace and challenge for all students
 - providing students with timely and helpful feedback, including through regular marking
 - through the strong leadership of teaching continue to share features of outstanding practice in the school to improve that which is satisfactory.
- Ensure that students' literacy skills are improved by:
 - encouraging students to develop a wider range of vocabulary in speech and writing
 - tackling weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure systematically across the curriculum.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The achievement of students, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is satisfactory and improving. Students enter the school with attainment which is below average. In 2008, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was broadly average, as was the proportion gaining these grades including English and mathematics. In 2009, these figures dipped so that standards were low. Leaders attribute this to difficulties associated with the move to the new building. This decline has been rectified and broadly average standards were once again attained in 2010. Although as yet unvalidated, these 2010 standards represent the highest the school has attained in its short history. These rises are the result of determined leadership to ensure strengthened learning and progress. Improvements in teaching, so that it is now good in quality, along with the high quality support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now moving students' learning on at much better rates than in the recent past when progress was weaker. Consequently, the previous underachievement is no longer a feature in the school and the students currently on roll are well placed to achieve their targets in the future. This was evident in the inspection by students making good or better progress in over two

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thirds of the lessons observed. There were no differences observed in rates of progress for students from different ethnic groups.

The school's focus on developing personal learning and thinking skills is enabling students to become more independent and cooperative learners. Students' behaviour is good, characterised by positive relationships and respectful manners. There is a high degree of confidence from students and their parents and carers in the school's approach to behaviour management. Students regard the school as a very safe place and praised the way in which it addresses their concerns and cares for them.

Students appreciate the school's efforts to keep them healthy and particularly value the contribution made by Sports College status to broadening their range of physical activities. Students contribute to their own community by fulfilling a variety of roles and show their concern for wider communities through extensive charity work. Social and moral development is strongly promoted within the school but there are fewer opportunities for spiritual reflection.

Students' attendance is average and the rate of persistent absence has reduced considerably due to the hard work of school staff in partnership with families and external agencies. Students' punctuality to lessons, identified as an issue for improvement in the previous inspection, is now good. Students cooperate well with each other and display levels of personal organisation and reliability that will equip them well as citizens.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2 3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and improving. No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection. The most effective lessons were characterised by engaging activities and an increasing focus on students learning independently, such as in a particularly effective art lesson where students set themselves process targets for their lino printing work at the start of the lesson and organised themselves to achieve these, supported by their teachers. Collaborative learning and peer assessment were strong in a drama lesson where students enacted Sweeney Todd's shaving contest. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, a challenging problem solving activity skilfully engaged everyone. Occasionally, though, teachers included too many activities in their lessons so that students had insufficient time to complete a task before moving on to the next one, resulting in frustration. There were good examples of teachers developing students' vocabulary creatively, such as in a music lesson where the teacher made a link between polyrhythms and polygons when introducing new technical vocabulary. However, there was inconsistency in other lessons about how teachers responded to students' literacy needs, resulting in persistent spelling errors and weaknesses in sentence structure being uncorrected in their written work. On some occasions, students were not prompted to extend their spoken answers to questions.

Curriculum developments since the last inspection have contributed to improved achievement. There is a good range of vocational and academic courses at Key Stage 4 to suit the needs and aspirations across the ability range. The school's excellent partnership with the co-located special school is being used to develop enhanced opportunities for students from both schools. Effective transition arrangements ensure that younger students settle quickly and very few leave at age 16 without a clear progression route. The school readily identifies and supports students who are potentially vulnerable, meeting their needs with sensitivity and care.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has articulated a compelling vision for the school that is understood and shared by staff and members of the governing body. The senior leadership team is creative and forward thinking, relishing challenge and driven by strong commitment to the students. As one member of staff commented, 'Leadership here is visionary.'

Leaders have evaluated the school's performance accurately and developed strategic plans that address its priorities. The school's monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and information derived from this process is used well to establish priorities for staff training. A carefully designed programme is in place enabling the school's priorities with regard to learning to be discussed and developed by all staff. Sharing of good practice across the school has begun. The school has rightly judged that there is a need to focus staff development on improving students' literacy skills. The governing body holds the school to account effectively and is proactive in its support for improvement. Safeguarding has a high priority and the school's procedures are effective. The school engages actively with parents and carers and has made valuable links with the wider community to ensure that its curriculum policies are understood. A strong commitment to community cohesion underpins the work of the school. Students and staff from a variety of different backgrounds get on very well with each other and are respectful of cultural differences. The school's citizenship programme is good and contributes strongly to the development of students' sense of themselves as stakeholders within local, national and global communities. Those responsible for leading and managing the school have created an inclusive, harmonious ethos where the needs of every student are accorded equal priority.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

3

Views of parents and carers

There was a much higher response rate to the questionnaire than that which is typically found. Most parents and carers expressed their satisfaction with all aspects of the school's work on which their opinions were sought, with almost all agreeing that the school kept their children safe. Several parents and carers provided additional written comments thanking the school for the exceptional care it had provided for individual students when they experienced difficulties.

The area of greatest concern expressed by a very small minority of parents and carers through the questionnaire feedback was around lunchtime arrangements. They were concerned that sometimes there was insufficient food and not enough time to eat it. Inspectors visited the school canteen and did not find this to be the case. The concern has been brought to the attention of the school leadership team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pendle Vale College 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 351 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 961 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	140	40	196	56	11	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	151	43	190	54	8	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	123	35	204	58	16	5	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	122	35	194	55	23	7	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	128	36	202	58	12	3	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	100	28	202	58	34	10	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	101	29	202	58	33	9	6	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)	127	36	201	57	11	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	118	34	200	57	15	4	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	141	40	178	51	19	5	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	83	24	224	64	22	6	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	115	33	208	59	14	4	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	168	48	164	47	13	4	3	1

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



29 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Pendle Vale College, Nelson, BB9 8LF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school. We enjoyed observing your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you. I would also like to thank those of you who returned questionnaires to us. We were pleased that the vast majority of you enjoy school, feel safe, think that the adults there help you and that the school is well led. We agree with you; we think that Pendle Vale is a very safe, caring and inclusive place. We were impressed with your hard work and good behaviour. Your teachers are determined that you should all do well in the future and they are providing you with many exciting opportunities so that you can achieve your goals. You obviously appreciate your new school building and your status as a Sports College. We think that your school motto 'Think Pendle Vale: Think Achievement' states what the school is all about.

We judged that your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education, with many good aspects. Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors provide good leadership. They and the staff in school work hard to provide an atmosphere in which you feel respected and are encouraged to do well. An increasing number of students are now attaining good results in examinations. There are strong relationships in school and everyone is equally valued. Many of you take on extra responsibilities, as school councillors, mentors, team captains, librarians and Junior Sports Leaders. In addition you show care and compassion for people in other communities; we were particularly impressed with the scale of your charity work.

Teaching is good at Pendle Vale and the quality of care and support you receive is of a high quality too. In short, the school has everything in place to move from strength to strength.

We have asked your teachers to do several things to improve further:

- challenge your thinking and move on your learning at a good pace
- provide you with clear feedback, including through marking, so that you can improve your work
- help you to improve your literacy skills by focusing on developing speaking and writing across the curriculum

■ continue to share the outstanding practice in school so that all teachers benefit. We know that you will play your part by continuing to work hard and rising to the new challenges you are set. Once again, thank you for welcoming us. I wish you all the best as you move through school and every success in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector

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