

Penarth Group School

128 Reddish Road, South Reddish, Stockport, Cheshire SK5 7JG

Inspection dates

12–14 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietor and leaders have ensured the independent school standards are fully met.
- The proprietor and school leaders have quickly tackled the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. This has resulted in improvements in the curriculum, teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils make good improvements in managing their behaviour. They are well supported by staff as they learn to control their emotions
- Good relationships between adults and pupils enable pupils to grow in their self-esteem, confidence and ability to interact with others.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes to their good personal development. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives as British citizens.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. They make good progress towards achieving a wide range of appropriate, nationally recognised qualifications.
- The school provides a secure setting where pupils feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding and pupils' welfare are effective. Pupils know how to raise any concerns they might have.
- Pupils' attendance is good and higher than in their previous schools.
- Teaching is good. Staff assess pupils' attainment accurately and track their progress well. Some tasks set for pupils do not match their needs closely enough. Occasionally, staff give pupils too much support as they complete their work.
- Leaders check carefully on the quality of teaching. However, some opportunities to share best practice across the school are missed
- School leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Some of the plans for improvement do not make it clear how the impact of any changes will be measured.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - improvement plans make it clear how the impact of any changes will be measured
 - staff are provided with more opportunities to share the best practice, thus further improving teaching and learning across the school.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - pupils are not over-supported when they complete their work
 - tasks set for pupils are consistently pitched at the right level for them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Governors and leaders have acted decisively to address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection, when the school was judged to require improvement. Staff changes have been made and these have improved subject expertise. Leaders have a more realistic view of the school's performance, which is rooted in the evidence they collect. Leaders rightly state that the effectiveness of leadership and management is now good because of the significant changes they have introduced.
- Well supported by the proprietor, leaders promote an ambitious culture where pupils are encouraged to succeed. As a result, both the education provision and outcomes for pupils continue to improve.
- Leaders use external professionals well to provide an objective view of the school's provision. This provides additional challenge to the school's leaders.
- Staff who spoke to the inspector indicated that they enjoy working at the school and value the training opportunities they are given. For example, information gained from courses has now been incorporated into the school's approach to supporting pupils who are struggling with their reading.
- Staff say this professional development has improved their practice and the impact is reflected in the improvements in teaching and learning observed during the inspection. Nevertheless, staff have too few opportunities to share best practice with colleagues across the school.
- In their discussion with the inspector, pupils commented favourably on how quickly they settled when they arrived. This is especially important as many pupils arrive at Penarth Group School following long periods of absence, after experiencing difficulties in their previous schools.
- The number of pupils on roll is growing as parents and carers and local authority partners are increasingly placing their faith in the work the school does. This is echoed by many staff who say they are proud to work in the school.
- The curriculum is tailored to meet pupils' individual needs and interests. There is an emphasis on developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics, which helps prepare them adequately for their return to school, for the workplace or for the next stage of their education. The curriculum is enriched through a programme of extra-curricular visits locally, as well as a range of visitors to the school. For example, pupils take part annually in the Children's Shakespeare Festival, which culminates in a live performance at the Lowry Theatre, Salford. Pupils and staff are unanimous in describing how pupils' confidence and language skills improve through their involvement with this project.
- The curriculum also provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in contexts that are meaningful and practically based. For example, pupils discussed how they would help to transform the school garden, a project that has grabbed their interest and which they enjoy talking about.

- The school's evaluation of its performance is an accurate one. Leaders link school development closely to their evaluation. However, some plans are not clear enough about how the impact of any changes will be measured.
- Staff performance is managed successfully, with more regular checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment than when the school was last inspected. These checks are used effectively to improve staff performance. Staff comment positively on the improvements made since the last inspection.
- Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is provided for well and the promotion of British values is embedded throughout the curriculum. It celebrates different beliefs and cultures, as well as promoting equality of opportunity and diversity. For example, pupils in English classes confidently discuss stereotyping and injustice and how this can affect people's lives, including their own.
- The school works well with a wide range of external agencies to provide pupils with effective care and welfare support. Parents and local authority representatives who spoke with the inspector were positive about the school's provision. Strong links with parents, local authority representatives, social workers and referring schools help to ensure that the needs of the pupils remain central to any decision-making.
- The school provides a comprehensive induction programme that leaves staff, including those who are temporary, well prepared when they start working with pupils.

Governance

- Governance of the school is effective.
- The proprietor and governors have vigorously tackled the weaknesses in governance and leadership identified in the last inspection report.
- Newly appointed governors bring a wide range of relevant expertise to their roles, enabling them to support and challenge leaders in the school. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and know which areas need to be improved. Governors hold leaders diligently to account for the quality of education and care they provide to pupils.
- Governors ensure that arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Suitable checks are undertaken to ensure that agreed policies are delivered in practice.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong safeguarding culture permeates the school. Staff understand the need to protect pupils against potential risks. Risk assessments are thorough and are regularly monitored by leaders to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are published on the school website. They are kept up-to-date, in line with current government legislation and guidance. All staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Consequently, staff have the skills and confidence necessary to take rapid action when concerns arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and successfully engage pupils in learning. For many pupils this is a new experience as they struggled to learn in their previous schools, often due to their poor behaviour. At Penarth, staff create a positive learning environment with activities that are interesting and motivating. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils' work, observations of lessons, individual records and leaders' records of teaching observations provide strong evidence that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning are good across the school.
- Teaching is securely based on establishing good working relationships with pupils and maintaining boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Teachers and support staff know pupils' needs well, concentrate on restoring their confidence and self-esteem and encourage them to learn effectively.
- Pupils respond well to this approach and recognise how much progress they have made since joining the school. 'I couldn't stay in class much at my last school but here the teachers listen to me more and explain what I need to do. That's why my work is better and I might be taking some exams', is typical of comments made by pupils during the course of the inspection.
- Teaching rightly concentrates on improving pupils' English and mathematical skills. These are the subjects most pupils find difficult and in which they have fallen behind in the past. For example, pupils engage in relevant, practical learning activities, such as measuring angles, recording the outcomes in their mathematics books and then making comparisons with shapes and angles they see in the world around them. Staff make good use of drama lessons to build pupils' confidence in speaking in a group, subsequently encouraging pupils to capture their feelings and emotions, either visually or in written form.
- Teaching benefits from the increase in subject specialists that are now working in the school. This is paying dividends, particularly in English and mathematics, where the improvements in teaching are most noticeable. While teachers are happy to share their practice with other staff, there are too few opportunities that allow this to happen. Best practice in teaching and learning is not regularly shared across the school.
- Systems for tracking pupils' progress are good. Pupils are provided with individual targets, based on their on-entry assessment, which are challenging but realistic. This information is shared with pupils, so they know how they can improve.
- To help them to plan pupils' work, teachers have a wealth of information available about pupils' prior learning. Teaching in small groups provides pupils with the intensive support they need. Occasionally, teachers fail to pitch work at the right level. Pupils can become frustrated when the work set for them is too hard or too easy and, consequently, their enthusiasm for learning is reduced.
- Staff regularly work alongside pupils as they encourage them to complete tasks. Sometimes they offer pupils too much support and this reduces their ability to work independently and develop resilience when faced with difficulties.

- Staff manage pupils' behaviour in lessons effectively. They demonstrate patience and tolerance when dealing with challenging behaviour. Staff successfully avoid confrontation and do not allow situations to escalate. They set clear expectations for pupils, challenge unacceptable behaviour and explain the consequences.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read widely and support them well with their growing understanding of texts and different genres. Most pupils were happy to read for the visiting inspector, spoke about books they enjoyed and showed positive attitudes towards reading.
- Staff take every opportunity to develop pupils' social and emotional skills, emphasising the importance of personal qualities such as respect and valuing each other's opinion. A good example of this approach was seen at the breakfast club at the start of the school day. It offered pupils a valuable time for discussion and planning the day ahead. During this session most pupils communicated with their peers and adults in a sensible, mature way, within a calm environment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils enter the school with poor attitudes to learning and low self-esteem. The majority who join the school have failed to thrive in their mainstream educational setting, and often arrive with extremely challenging behaviour, and social, emotional and mental health needs. Staff are successful in ensuring that transitions, when pupils join the school, are as smooth as possible.
- Pupils know that adults care about their safety and welfare. They are confident that staff will listen to any concerns that they raise and help them overcome any barriers to their future success. These include supporting pupils with any emotional or mental health difficulties they experience. Parents who spoke with the inspector confirmed the difference that the school had made for their children. 'My son is now a regular attender at school and he is so much happier and ready to learn' is typical of the comments made by parents.
- Pupils benefit from strong pastoral support systems. This ensures that they are settled at the start of each school day and ready to learn. Staff are well trained in observing pupils' behaviour to spot any concerns about their welfare or attitudes. They intervene quickly to support pupils before they can affect the learning of others.
- In conversations with the inspector, pupils said they feel safe and secure and know what to do if they have any concerns. They understand the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, but point out that it rarely happens at Penarth. They are confident that any incidents would be dealt with promptly.
- A strong emphasis is placed on promoting pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Small group discussions are used successfully to extend pupils' understanding of risk in relation to their computer use, sexual health, misuse of drugs, alcohol and smoking. Pupils are also encouraged to become physically active, taking advantage of the sports and outdoor activities programmes.

- Pupils are provided with additional roles and responsibilities through the 'pupil voice' group, through which they contribute ideas to improve the school. Through visits to a nearby care home and supporting food banks, pupils say how proud they are to support local community initiatives.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils recognise the improvements they have made in managing their behaviour since joining the school and say they have learned to control their emotions more maturely. They also know what they need to do to improve. The longer pupils stay at the school, the more positive their behaviour and attitudes to learning become.
- There are occasions, usually when pupils are in the earlier stages of settling into the school, that learning is disrupted. When problems do occur, other pupils know not to join in with those who are finding it hard to manage. Pupils value the consistent way in which they are treated by staff.
- Staff challenge inappropriate behaviour, including unacceptable language, and pupils generally respond positively because they know what is expected.
- Pupils' attendance has improved. Many join the school with a history of poor attendance at their previous schools and some have not attended regular education for long periods. Staff work hard and are successful in ensuring regular attendance, making home visits where necessary.
- Exclusions, including fixed-term, are rare and continue to decline.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school because of the difficulties they faced in their previous schools. They join at various points during their school career.
- On joining the school, pupils often have major gaps in their learning and negative attitudes towards school. As a result, most, but not all, enter school with standards below those expected for their age.
- Scrutiny of previous test results, pupils' current work and records of their progress confirm that, over time, pupils are making good rates of progress. Understandably, there is a strong emphasis on improving pupils' basic literacy and mathematical skills across all subjects. Growing success in these areas enables pupils to build on their knowledge and skills and apply their learning across the curriculum.
- Pupils read regularly and many develop an enjoyment of books. They are encouraged to read more frequently by providing texts that interest them. A positive reading culture exists throughout the school. Pupils are often reluctant readers initially and some have poor literacy skills, but gradually their reading ages improve and they become more confident readers.
- Throughout the year groups, where appropriate, pupils are encouraged to study for qualifications and the school prepares them well for examinations. For example, pupils work towards achieving functional skills certificates, entry-level qualifications, and GCSEs.

- Pupils benefit from clear, impartial careers advice and guidance which they receive from an external consultant. Staff support pupils with applications for the next stage in their education or training. As a result, pupils are well-prepared and make informed choices about their next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	135526
DfE registration number	356/6031
Inspection number	10067897

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Pat Swallow
Chair	Pat Swallow
Headteacher	Stephen Watson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,700
Telephone number	0161 483 1212
Website	www.penarthgroupschool.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@penarthgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October–2 November 2017

Information about this school

- Penarth Group School is an independent day school for boys and girls. It is part of the Penarth Group.
- The school opened in March 2008 and moved to the current premises in May 2017. A material change inspection was carried out in April 2017 in relation to the suitability of these new premises.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) to meet the needs of up to 15 pupils between the ages of eight and 16 years. The school had a material change authorised by the DfE to allow it to admit a small number of pupils up to 17 years old for

the 2016/17 academic year only.

- The school's last standard inspection was in November 2017.
- All pupils speak English as their first language and they have an education, health and care plan.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- The school's long-term aim is 'to nurture confident individuals and confident citizens, who can lead safe and happy lives and who will make a positive contribution to society'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in all classes. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body, other governors, the assistant manager of a care home, a parent, the headteacher, other school leaders and staff.
- The inspector had a telephone conversation with an officer from a local authority that places pupils at the school.
- The inspector met with pupils both formally and informally. He looked at pupils' work and the school's records of their progress. He also listened to individual pupils as they read in class.
- There were insufficient responses to generate a report from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector took account of one written response from a parent.
- The inspector took account of staff views, following discussions with them. There were no responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including those available on its website. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.

Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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