

Pensby High School for Girls

Irby Road, Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside, CH61 6XN

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress in Key Stage 3 and 4 and achieve well in almost all subjects. The results achieved by Year 11 are rising, and are above average.
- Most teaching is at least good, and some is outstanding.
- A wide variety of subjects and courses enrich students' learning. This helps students to enjoy school. Courses are well matched to students' interests and abilities.
- Behaviour across the school is good. Relationships between students and teachers are strong. Students are proud of their school. Attendance is above average.
- The excellent care that students receive helps them to feel safe in school.
- The school is strongly led by the Principal and the head of school. They are well supported by the senior team and other leaders.
- The performance of teachers is managed well. The clear focus on improving teaching and learning means that it is getting better.
- School leaders carefully check the progress made by students; if any fall behind, effective extra help is quickly given.
- Governors provide a good overview of the school's work. They have clear plans for how the school should develop, and a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The sixth form requires improvement. Although overall students make the progress that would be expected from their starting points, their results across different subjects are too variable.
- Teaching across the school is not yet outstanding, and a small amount requires improvement because teachers' expectations are not always high enough.
- Sometimes, teachers spend too long introducing lessons. This slows students' progress.
- In some lessons, students do not have the chance to work independently or make decisions for themselves about their learning.
- Teachers do not always plan tasks which will challenge their more-able students and enable them to make rapid progress in lessons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons, of which five were joint observations with members of the leadership team. They also looked at students' work and attended three assemblies.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, staff, school leaders, governors and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 29 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, and considered 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at documents, including: the school's plans for improvement; records of the quality of teaching; school information on the progress of students and nationally published results. Inspectors looked at records of students' behaviour and attendance, and at how the school keeps its students safe.

Inspection team

Michael Phipps, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Timothy Gartside

Additional Inspector

John Leigh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school for girls, and has a small sixth form.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is slightly lower than average. The pupil premium is the additional funding provided for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals, and children from service families. Almost all supported children in this school are those eligible for free school meals.
- The very large majority of students are of White British heritage, and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is slightly higher than average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative or off-site provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Pensby High School for Girls has been part of a hard federation with the adjoining boys' school since 2010. The federation has one governing body. Most staff work across both schools.
- Sixth form provision is shared with the boys' school and with one other local secondary school.
- The Principal was appointed in December 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure all students make good or better progress in the sixth form by:
 - checking more regularly the quality of all teaching in the sixth form
 - setting ambitious targets for students to achieve, and checking that they are on target to reach them.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - making sure students can quickly start work and make progress in lessons without a lengthy introduction from the teacher
 - giving students more chances to work without close guidance from the teacher, and to make decisions for themselves about their learning
 - planning lessons in which more is expected of the more-able pupils so they make faster progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' standards on entry to the school are broadly average. By the end of Year 11, the proportion who achieve five or more A* to C grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is above the national average. Standards are improving over time.
- Students make good progress in English, with the proportions making and exceeding the expected progress higher than average. GCSE results in English are generally higher than national results. A dip in results in 2012 was swiftly corrected.
- Achievement in mathematics is good and improving. GCSE results are above national figures. Around three quarters of students make expected or better than expected progress in the subject.
- The policy of entering students early for the GCSE examination in mathematics works well. Students retake the examination if they have not reached or exceeded their target grades, and can take a higher qualification after GCSE.
- School information on students' progress shows they make good progress across all year groups in Key Stages 3 and 4. This was confirmed by lesson observations and by inspectors looking at students' work. Students also make particularly good progress in science, modern foreign languages and humanities subjects.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium are well supported. As a result, students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve GCSE results in English and mathematics that are almost in-line with other students in school.
- The school has spent extra funds effectively to provide help for students who join the school in year 7 with low levels of literacy and numeracy. As a result, most of these students catch up well.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good. They make the same progress as other students in school, and their results are above those of similar students nationally.
- Students' literacy skills develop well across different subjects. Students have good written and oral communication skills. They read widely, and use the well-resourced library on site.
- More-able students make progress in line with other students. However, they are not always given work which fully stretches them, or the chance to develop independence in their work; as a result, in some subjects, too few achieve the highest GCSE grades.
- Although results in the small sixth form are slowly rising, achievement in the sixth form still requires improvement. Most students make the progress that would be expected from their different starting points, but their results in different subjects are too variable, both at AS and at A level. Achievement is stronger in history, English and in work-related courses, but weaker in science subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is at least good, and an increasing amount is outstanding. Relationships between students and teachers are warm and respectful.
- In the best lessons, teachers continuously check students' understanding. For example, throughout an outstanding Year 11 mathematics lesson, the teacher regularly checked students' answers on their small whiteboards. Students were then provided with more challenging work when each was ready.
- Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects. In a Year 12 chemistry lesson on electron orbits, strong subject knowledge meant the teacher could answer students' questions very clearly, and a teacher-designed puzzle task helped students make excellent progress.
- In a food technology lesson, Year 9 students made outstanding progress because the pace of

learning was brisk; the teacher questioned students skilfully and students worked enthusiastically in teams without relying on the teacher.

- Teachers assess pupils' achievement regularly and accurately. Their marking of students' work is detailed and gives students clear feedback on how to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are used well and make a good contribution to the learning of students who need extra help. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, the teaching assistant very effectively helped a small number of pupils during a whole-class teaching session so they could make good progress.
- A small amount of teaching requires improvement because some teachers' expectations are not always high enough.
- Sometimes, teachers spend too long introducing lessons, or leading a discussion from the front of the class, which slows students' progress. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 English lesson, which was too dominated by the teacher. Although they made good progress, students had few chances to learn for themselves or to discuss the topic, which would have deepened their understanding.
- In some lessons, students do not have the chance to work without help from the teacher, or to make decisions about their learning; this limits their independence.
- Teachers do not always plan tasks which will make their more-able students think hard. This means some do not make as rapid progress in lessons as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave very well in class and around the school at break and lunchtimes. They are polite, friendly and respectful towards adults and each other.
- Attitudes to learning are good, and students work hard. They enjoy answering questions and offering their opinions in lessons.
- Students say they feel safe and well looked after in school. They understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Students know about different types of bullying, but say it is very rare in this school. School records confirm this. Students say that if bullying did take place, it would be swiftly dealt with.
- Disruption to lessons caused by poor behaviour and racist incidents are both rare.
- Figures for student exclusions from school are below national figures.
- Parents and carers feel that students behave well in school, are looked after well and feel safe. Members of staff also feel that students behave well.
- Attendance is rising and is above the national average.
- Students are proud of their school. They understand the importance of good behaviour and positive attitudes.
- Students' behaviour and safety are not outstanding because learners are not always encouraged to play an active part in lessons. There is not enough outstanding teaching which would allow students consistently to develop their thirst for knowledge and their independent learning skills.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by the Principal and the head of school. They are well supported by senior leaders. Their clear focus on improving teaching and learning means that the quality of teaching is getting better, and students' results are improving.
- Strong leadership, an honest view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, well focused plans to improve, and rising results all show that leaders have strong capacity to improve further.
- The school's systems for managing the performance of teachers are robust, and linked to salary progression. Judgements on teachers' performance are based on students' progress. Any underperformance is tackled vigorously by senior leaders. There are good opportunities for teachers to improve their skills through an extensive programme of professional development.

- Students enjoy a wide variety of subjects and courses which enrich learning. Visits, clubs, positions of responsibility and special events contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to their physical wellbeing. Courses are well matched to students' interests and abilities. There is an appropriate balance of academic and work-related courses both in Key Stage 4 and increasingly in the sixth form.
- School senior leaders and teachers in charge of subjects carefully check the progress made by all groups of students. If any students fall behind, effective help is quickly given.
- School leaders have used additional funding from the pupil premium well. Extra funds have been spent on extra classes in English and mathematics, and on small group and individual tuition. This has successfully closed the gap between the achievement of supported students and others in school.
- The school provides students with appropriate high quality independent advice and guidance to help them decide their next steps in education, training or employment.
- The school has received good support from the local authority. Much of this support aims to improve outcomes in the school's partner school in the federation. Since most staff teach across both schools, this support has also helped drive improvement in this school.
- The federation with the boys' school has strengthened the leadership capacity of a newly formed group of teachers who are in charge of several subjects. They now have responsibility for checking the quality of teaching and raising standards in their subjects across both sites. These teachers are developing well in their roles as future school leaders.
- Leadership of the sixth form requires improvement, because students' achievement is not good. The recent improvements made by leaders to check the quality of teaching and to check students' progress towards more ambitious targets have not yet had time to make a significant impact on students' results.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are ambitious to improve the school. They provide a good overview of the school's work and have clear plans for how the school should develop in the future. They have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further, and they contribute well to plans for improvement. Governors have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, and of how teachers' performance is managed. They ensure that the Principal robustly tackles any underperformance in teaching. They understand what student performance data tells them about how well the school is doing compared to other schools nationally. This means they are able to hold school leaders to account, and challenge them to improve the school further. Governors oversee the school's budget well, and are well informed about how extra funds like the pupil premium are spent, and the results achieved. They carefully consider the skills and expertise they currently have, and what might be needed. They are keen to improve their skills and many of them have undertaken training to help them carry out their roles more effectively.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105101
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	413298

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	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	577
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Draper
Headteacher	Pat Russell
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2009
Telephone number	0151 342 0570
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Email address	schooloffice@psf.wirral.sch.uk

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