

Pensby High School

Irby Road, Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside CH61 6XN

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2018

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong, effective leadership. He has been successful in ensuring that Pensby High School provides a good standard of education following the amalgamation of two schools in 2015.
- The headteacher and his leadership team ensure that pupils are safe, behave well and make good progress. Leaders have the drive, determination and capacity to improve the school further.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide appropriate and effective support and challenge to the leadership team. Governors have contributed directly to the good-quality education that the school provides.
- School leaders plan Year 7 pupils' transition from primary school carefully. Consequently, these pupils settle happily and make good progress.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For example, leaders have successfully improved the progress that disadvantaged boys make.
- Leaders review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it is well planned. Consequently, pupils follow a broad range of subjects that meet their interests and needs.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. As a result, pupils are happy at school, engage successfully in their learning and make good progress.
- The sixth-form provision is good. Students make good progress from their starting points. Despite the small number of students, leaders carefully tailor programmes of study to meet their individual needs.
- Although the programme of ongoing staff development is good, leaders do not provide sufficient opportunities for staff to share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Overall, teaching is good and pupils make good progress in their learning. However, some teachers do not routinely plan lessons that stretch and challenge the most able pupils so that they make rapid progress.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. Leaders are aware that provision in science and mathematics is not as strong as in other subjects. Actions are in place to resolve this but currently from their starting points some pupils do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have developed an appropriate programme of personal, social, health and economic education. However, it is not taught consistently effectively across the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the programme of ongoing staff development to ensure that pupils benefit further from the good practice in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Ensure that teachers plan lessons that consistently stretch and challenge the most able pupils, so they consistently make the progress of which they are capable.
- Further improve outcomes in mathematics and science by ensuring that teachers have high expectations for pupils.
- Improve consistency in the teaching of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) so that it is taught effectively across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new school opened in September 2015. Since then, the governing body, headteacher and senior leadership team have wasted no time in implementing their vision to ensure that the school provides a good-quality education for pupils. They have been very successful in this mission.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership. Aply supported by his senior leadership team and the governing body, he has resolutely tackled weaker teaching and made staff aware of his high expectations. The quality of teaching continues to improve apace, resulting in more pupils making consistently good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders know the school well and they have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They know where teaching, learning and assessment are the strongest. They also identify where they are less effective by monitoring and evaluating the effect of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.
- Senior leaders and governors are relentless in their determination to provide the best possible education for pupils. Staff value their strong leadership, support and guidance. The vast majority of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire said that the school is effectively led and that they are proud to work there.
- Leaders use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils imaginatively and effectively. Leaders support disadvantaged pupils to engage in a range of creative and academic activities, raising the expectations they have of themselves. For example, leaders have successfully used the funding to improve the progress that disadvantaged boys make across the school.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It meets the needs of the pupils because it is carefully planned. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum regularly and take action to address weaker aspects. For example, PSHE is recognised as an area which needs to be strengthened. The curriculum meets pupils' needs but teaching is not yet fully effective in sustaining learning and progress. That said, plans are in place to address this. Through appropriate advice and guidance, leaders ensure that pupils access courses that will best meet their needs. Pupils value access to the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer.
- The programme of ongoing staff training is good. Teachers value the opportunities that they have to improve their practice. Leaders target training well at the individuals, subjects or issues where it is most needed. However, leaders do not fully exploit opportunities to share good practice between teachers to further improve pupils' learning and progress.
- Teachers who are new to the school, especially newly qualified teachers, appreciate the support that leaders provide. They receive relevant training and effective subject mentoring, which helps them to settle quickly into the school. For example, leaders have established a successful coaching programme to improve further the quality of teaching.
- The majority of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire agree that leaders

use professional development to encourage, challenge and support them. Newly and recently qualified teachers told inspectors that their colleagues have given them high-quality training and support.

- The school's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is strong. Leaders weave opportunities to promote pupils' SMSC development throughout the curriculum. Pupils benefit particularly from well-taught ethics and philosophy lessons.

Governance of the school

- Governors ensure that they are thoroughly informed about the school's performance. They hold senior and middle leaders to account for the effectiveness of their work to improve the school. Governors assure themselves that the school provides a good quality of education.
- Governors are fully involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the school. Consequently, they understand its strengths and weaknesses well. They ensure that improvement priorities are sharp and focused. For example, there is a governors' strategic improvement group that focuses on continual improvements to mathematics and science.
- Governors ask pertinent questions about the information that leaders provide. Governors successfully challenge leaders about their work. For example, governors rigorously question leaders about pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors routinely speak to pupils to gather their views. They follow up any issues raised during subsequent visits.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties. For example, they ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The training of staff and governors in safeguarding policies and procedures is comprehensive. Leaders make sure that all staff training is refreshed regularly. They also ensure that staff who join the school during the year receive appropriate safeguarding training, including in child protection.
- Adults know about the potential areas of risk for young people. They receive effective training to help them to identify a child at risk and to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse.
- Leaders provide effective early help to pupils and families to prevent problems from escalating. They work closely with outside agencies by raising any child protection issues swiftly and by checking that appropriate actions are taken.
- School leaders work effectively with parents, carers and external agencies. Checks made by inspectors demonstrate that referrals are followed up in a robust manner and that record-keeping is good.

- Pupils said that they feel safe and parents strongly support this view. Pupils are clear whom to speak with if they need support. They told inspectors that the staff are caring towards them. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils feel that staff deal with it effectively if it does occur.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective leadership is smoothing out any weaker aspects of teaching. Teaching is now consistently good across the school. Strong relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to a calm and positive atmosphere. This gives pupils confidence to learn. They readily respond to teachers' requests and make good progress.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and they use questioning effectively to check the level of pupils' understanding. Most teachers extend learning through probing questions in lessons. This provides pupils with opportunities to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Although teachers plan effectively for learning and progress, some teachers do not routinely plan lessons that enable the most able pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils respond well to the feedback that teachers give them during lessons and this helps them to improve their work.
- Teachers use information about pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to support them to learn well. Consequently, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make progress in line with other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Work in pupils' books shows that teachers match work to pupils' differing abilities in most subjects. They have high expectations of pupils and the standard of presentation in books shows that the majority of pupils take pride in their work.
- Although teaching in mathematics and science is now good, some pupils do not make the more rapid progress of which they are capable. This is because teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. Activities are not always pitched at a level to stretch and challenge these pupils.
- Conversely, there are significant strengths in history. Teachers' good subject knowledge makes activities interesting and provides challenge to pupils. This encourages them to make very good progress.
- Leaders are also aware where more work is needed to improve teaching further still. For example, in PSHE, some pupils lose focus which limits their ability to learn.
- Reports to parents include clear information about how well each pupil is progressing and what they need to do to improve further. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they receive valuable information from the school about their child's progress.
- Good teaching ensures that disadvantaged pupils make good progress overall. In subjects where they have been less successful, for example in mathematics and science, progress is now good.
- Pupils are positive about the improvements in teaching since the merger of the two

schools. They were keen to tell inspectors how much the school has changed for the better.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils trust staff to deal with bullying or other problems that they might have. Leaders provide additional support for any pupils who are struggling with mental health issues. Assemblies and PSHE lessons are used to promote online safety and pupils spoke confidently to inspectors about keeping themselves safe.
- Work to promote equality is effective and pupils in all year groups talk confidently about respecting and supporting others, regardless of their differences.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They show high levels of resilience and self-confidence.
- Pupils' transition from primary school is sensitively led and managed. Inspectors spoke to pupils in Year 7 who said that the support they were given had helped them to settle quickly into their new school. Staff visit primary schools and use the information about pupils' prior learning and experiences effectively. They ensure that teachers and other adults are aware of pupils' educational backgrounds and requirements, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, before they start Year 7.
- Pupils take pride in their work, their appearance and their school environment. When given the opportunity, pupils work well together in pairs and groups. During these tasks, pupils display confidence and independence. Pupils whom inspectors met during the inspection spoke very positively about their school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have improved behaviour in the school substantially since the merger. In nearly every lesson, pupils show an enthusiasm for their work. There is a purposeful atmosphere and strong climate for learning across the school.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and courteous. They move around the school calmly and arrive at lessons promptly. In lessons, teachers successfully engage the vast majority of pupils in their learning.
- Overall, attendance is above the national average and the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school is below the national average. However, leaders recognise that pupils' attendance remains a key priority because a small minority of disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent from school.
- Exclusions for poor behaviour were high when the two schools first merged. The overall figure has reduced and is now close to the national average. Exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have been high but are now reducing quickly. Teachers are consistent in their expectations of behaviour.

Pupils are aware of what is unacceptable and the consequences of their actions.

- The very small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are cared for well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are continuously improving. In 2017, pupils' overall progress at the end of key stage 4 was above the national average.
- All groups of pupils make strong progress in the subjects that they choose as options in key stage 4.
- Inspectors' analysis of pupils' current work shows that progress is good across a broad range of subjects. In English, history and geography, pupils' progress is particularly strong.
- School leaders have an accurate picture of where pupils achieve well and where actions are needed to improve outcomes further. They use this information effectively to improve progress for pupils. For example, outcomes in science were below average in 2017. Leaders have taken action to resolve issues that led to some pupils underachieving. During the inspection, inspectors saw evidence of good practice in classrooms and good work in current pupils' books in science. In mathematics, improvements ensure that most current pupils are working at the expected level. Progress is rising in both subjects despite some variability remaining in teachers' expectations of their pupils.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have their individual requirements identified and met well. Accordingly, their progress is generally good across a broad range of subjects and they move on to further education or training successfully. Leaders ensure that funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is targeted effectively.
- Leaders use catch-up funding effectively. Pupils who join the school in Year 7 with very low levels of literacy and numeracy receive additional support. This support is effective in helping most of them to catch up so that they can access the curriculum successfully.
- Leaders support disadvantaged pupils well to make good progress from their starting points. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are catching up with other pupils nationally. For example, disadvantaged girls make more secure progress in mathematics and disadvantaged boys' progress in English is much stronger.
- Overall, the most able pupils, including the disadvantaged most able, make good progress. Progress is stronger in key stage 3 as a direct result of the school's 'scholars' programme', which is designed to emulate teaching and learning at a highly selective university. This support raises pupils' aspirations. At times, however, the progress of the most able slows, especially in key stage 4 when teaching fails to challenge and extend their learning. Consequently, these pupils do not routinely make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils who access alternative provision make good progress.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The proportion of pupils entering sustained education, employment or training at the end of Year 11 has improved since the merger and is now in line with the national average.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective and leaders share the same high aspirations for students as seen elsewhere in the school. They know the students well.
- Leaders provide additional support for those at risk of falling behind in their learning. Leaders monitor students' performance closely.
- Overall, students make good progress from their starting points because of good-quality teaching. In particular, students make strong progress and achieve well on vocational courses because leaders have a clear understanding of the students' abilities and suitability for the courses offered. Vocational courses are a significant strength of the school.
- Students who resit mathematics and English GCSE examinations make good progress.
- Students have appropriate opportunities to undertake work experience placements and work-related learning activities. These are a valuable part of their study programmes.
- The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets the needs of the students attending the sixth form.
- The retention rate of students from Year 12 to Year 13 is good.
- All students in the sixth form receive effective careers guidance from the school's careers adviser. They use this to assist them in making decisions about their next steps. As a result, students are well prepared for further education, higher education, employment or training.
- Students behave well in the sixth form and they are safe. They also attend school regularly.
- Relationships between sixth-form students and younger pupils are positive. Sixth-form students have the opportunity to work with younger pupils by supporting them with literacy and by assisting with extra-curricular activities. This enables students to take on leadership roles.

School details

Unique reference number	105101
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10044524

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 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	688
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Draper
Headteacher	Kevin Flanagan
Telephone number	0151 342 0570
Website	www.pensbyhighschool.com
Email address	schooloffice@psf.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- In September 2015, the school opened following the merger of Pensby High School for Boys and Pensby High School for Girls. It occupies the site of the former girls' school.
- The school is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The school is in a selective local authority.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school uses Wirral Respite Alternative Provision for a very small number of pupils.

- Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations of teaching and learning across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited registration sessions and watched an assembly.
- Inspectors looked carefully at pupils' books during lessons and carried out a focused work scrutiny in English, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers who recently joined the school, representatives of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 58 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 78 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 90 responses to Parent View. Seven free-text responses to Parent View were also reviewed.
- Inspectors spent time observing lunchtime, breaktimes and pupils leaving the school at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally around the school and held formal discussions with groups of pupils.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Mark Burgess, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Bailey	Ofsted Inspector
Tuesday Humby	Ofsted Inspector
Sheldon Logue	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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