



Pensby High School for Girls

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105101
LEA Wirral
Inspection number 277295
Inspection dates 30 January 2006 to 31 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Judith Tolley CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Irby Road
School category	Community		Heswall
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Wirral, Merseyside CH61 6XN
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	0151 6481941
Number on roll	881	Fax number	0151 6488103
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Gerrie
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mr S Hyden

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Pensby High School for Girls is an 11-18 school which until recently took girls who were part of a compulsory selective system and had not gained entry to local grammar schools. The area remains selective at age 11 (around 40% of pupils attend grammar schools), but this selective system is no longer compulsory so that current entry to the school is from the whole ability range. The school is smaller than average. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups. The school is a Beacon school and has Sports and Artsmark status as well as being a Health Promoting school. The school runs a joint sixth form with the adjacent boys' school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Senior managers correctly think that this is an outstanding school. The school's ethos is exceptional because expectations are high and the school ensures all pupils are given the means to achieve their potential. The pupils attain high standards and make excellent progress in the main school as a result of the very supportive atmosphere where pupils believe they can succeed and because of high quality teaching. Pupils hold the school in high regard and value the very good relationships they have with teachers and adults at the school. Personal development is outstanding. This is reflected in pupils' excellent attitudes towards their learning, high levels of self esteem and positive relationships. Excellent links exist with a range of external bodies to support the education and welfare of pupils. Pupils feel safe and enjoy their school lives. Good teaching, a broad and inclusive curriculum, as well as a wide range of extra curricular activities, make important contributions to pupils' learning and personal development. The school has excellent and astute leadership focused clearly on continued improvement and high standards of care. Efficient management ensures it provides excellent value for money. There has been significant and sustained improvement since the last inspection. It has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The day to day running of the sixth form is efficient and clearly focused on students' well-being. The school has been successful in its collaboration with the boys' school to provide a good range of courses at advanced level including vocational options. It continues to expand the range of vocational courses to better meet the needs of its students. The quality of teaching is good. This, combined with the maturity and commitment of the students, leads to good achievement. However, despite the best efforts of the school, some students follow courses which are not well matched to their abilities and the monitoring of academic progress is not rigorous enough for these students. The senior leadership team is aware of this and has implemented strategies to address these issues.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the monitoring of academic progress in Year 12 to ensure students achieve as well as they should and are following appropriate courses.
- Spread good practice in the use of day to day assessment in lesson planning in order to involve pupils in planning and tracking their own progress and to improve the quality of all teaching to that of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, although there are fewer than average very high attaining pupils. Standards reached at the end of Year 9 in the national tests have been consistently above average over the last three years, with results in English being particularly impressive. Despite the fact that selected pupils from the area attend grammar schools the results at the higher Level 7 were above the national average. These high standards are consistent with standards of work across all subjects seen during the inspection.

Through Key Stage 4 pupils continue to make excellent progress so that by the end of Year 11 standards are well above average. GCSE results have been consistently high over the past four years and are particularly good in science, with twice as many pupils as girls nationally gaining the highest grades. The proportion of pupils gaining five A* to C grades has been consistently and significantly above the national average over the last three years, with almost every pupil gaining five A* to G grades. Pupils rise to the challenge of meeting very ambitious targets by gaining better results than their prior attainment suggests.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make excellent progress because of the school's relentless insistence on removing barriers in order to ensure every pupil achieves their potential.

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average for students following A level courses since a large proportion of higher attaining students go elsewhere. Standards in Year 13 are broadly average and students achieve well overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Behaviour and attitudes throughout the school are exemplary due to teachers' high expectations and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils feel they have a strong voice through the school council and their opinions are valued. They feel safe and the 'buddy system' gives effective support where needed. Attendance rates are good. Pupils value the new rewards systems recently put into place. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils show mutual respect and understand the feelings, beliefs and values of others as evidenced by the support given to charities and other causes. Successes are celebrated and pupils feel a great sense of worth. School is enjoyable. 'It gets better as you get older,' said one Year 10 girl. Healthy living is successfully promoted through sporting activities, the personal social and health education programme (PSHE) and canteen provision; the school has been awarded the status of Health Promoting school. Pupils appreciate opportunities to take responsibility such as being representatives on the school council, librarians and helping out at care homes for the aged in the community. Students in the sixth form play a

significant role in the whole school community. They leave school articulate and mature young adults

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There are many examples of outstanding practice. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. Most lessons are well planned using a variety of resources and teaching styles. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations, ask searching questions and make use of regular assessments to plan for the next stage of pupils' work. Pupils make the best progress when they are encouraged to work independently to explore issues for themselves. In a Year 7 science lesson, for example, pupils conducted experiments to discover relationships between weight and force. They made good progress because of the practical nature of the activities and because they were expected to relate what they had found to other topics they had covered. In the few lessons where teaching was not so effective pace was slower, explanations were less clear and teachers did not use assessment information as effectively as they might to meet individual needs. The school uses a variety of data to monitor the progress being made by pupils and parents are kept regularly informed. There are pockets of excellent practice in the use of assessment in lesson planning and in involving pupils in tracking and planning their own progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive beneficial help because their needs are planned for thoroughly and teaching is effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school is accurate in assessing its curriculum as good. There are a wide range of courses that are well matched to pupils' abilities. Statutory requirements are met. An increasing number of vocational courses enhance the choices for pupils as they move up the school. The school, in collaboration with the adjacent boys' school and other providers in the area, offers a wide choice of courses to advanced level including a good range of vocational courses.

A wide range of extra curricular clubs and opportunities for supervised study support complements the curriculum. After school and lunchtime clubs are well attended and appreciated by pupils. There are many enrichment opportunities including school productions, theatre trips, residential trips, study trips and visits abroad.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school evaluates care, guidance and support as outstanding. Inspectors agree, but feel this aspect is not quite as good in the sixth form. Care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school's drive to raise standards. This view is endorsed by parents and pupils. Transition from primary school is smooth and pupils settle quickly as a result of the strong links and induction process. Effective procedures are in place for dealing with occasional behaviour or bullying issues. Pupils feel they are treated fairly by teachers. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are fully in place. Child protection procedures are clear and well understood. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure. The pastoral system is a strength. Pupils know who to turn to for advice and help. The Year 9 options guidance is valued by pupils. Regular monitoring sheets and end of term reports inform parents and pupils of achievement.

In the sixth form, students are well cared for but the quality of advice and guidance relating to course choices, particularly at AS level, is less secure. Prospective sixth form students are able to attend a residential team building weekend and, as a result, settle quickly into sixth form life. Students are guided to suitable courses but not all heed this advice and follow courses that are inappropriate to their needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership by the headteacher is outstanding; his determination to raise standards year on year, to provide a wide curriculum and an environment conducive to high achievement enabling all pupils to achieve to their potential has been very successful; there has been significant improvement in standards since the last inspection. Senior and middle managers share the headteacher's vision and work together effectively. The school's systems of self-evaluation are excellent and give a clear direction to whole school planning and target setting.

The senior managers of the school know its main strengths and areas for development well. They are energetic in seeking improvements. The system of tracking pupils' progress and setting targets is very effective in raising standards and ensuring pupils achieve their potential. The school's targets are appropriate. The monitoring of lessons provides an accurate view of the quality of teaching and the information is used very effectively to promote the development of teaching and learning. Governors provide effective support and are actively involved in the life of the school, for example in overseeing literacy and numeracy initiatives.

The management of the sixth form is not as strong as in the main school. For example, the action taken as a result of early monitoring of academic progress is not rigorous enough to ensure all students are following appropriate courses. The school

improvement plan has identified the sixth form management as an area for development and senior managers have appropriate strategies in place to tackle these issues.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our visit to inspect your school, we would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for your contribution to the inspection. As a result of our visit, we have decided that Pensby High School for Girls is outstanding. It has many strengths; for example, the range of subjects and extra curricular activities you are offered is very rich and very well matched to your needs and aspirations; this plays an important role in enabling you all to do your best.

At the same time, teachers have high expectations of you and encourage you to do your very best. You usually have excellent attitudes towards your learning and get on very well with each other and your teachers.

The adults in the school care very well for you. You are treated fairly and bullying is usually quickly and effectively dealt with. However, in the sixth form some of you follow courses which are not always the best choice to ensure you do your best. We have asked the school to monitor your progress more closely in Year 12 to ensure this no longer happens.

The quality of teaching and learning is good; there are many excellent lessons. We have asked Mr Hyden to work with your teachers to try to make all lessons as interesting as the very best ones. The school has excellent leadership and management and the Senior Leadership Team is always striving to improve the school and the examination results. It has been very successful in achieving this since the last inspection.