

# The Pingle School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	112995
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325737
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1231
Sixth form	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Rhind
Headteacher	Mrs S Tabberer
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 February 2006
School address	Coronation Street Swadlincote Derbyshire DE11 0QA
Telephone number	01283 216837
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 42 classrooms, and held meetings with governors, staff, local authority officers, and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at school performance data, governors' minutes, school policies and 157 parental questionnaires.

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

- the progress made by all groups of learners
- the quality of lesson practice, marking of work, and lesson planning
- the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the impact of the specialist mathematics and computing status.

## Information about the school

The Pingle School is larger than most secondary schools and became a specialist mathematics and computing college in 2005. Almost all students come from a White British heritage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national average, with a slightly higher proportion in receipt of a statement of special educational needs. Students enter the school with academic standards slightly lower than the national average. The school has a special support centre for up to 42 students with complex learning difficulties.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

### Main findings

The Pingle school is providing a sound education to all of its students, with good support, guidance and care. Provision is particularly effective for looked after students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and these students achieve well in comparison to their peers. There have been recent improvements to outcomes for students in the sixth form, and almost all students in the main school make at least the academic progress expected from their attainment on entry to the school. The curriculum in the main school is improving, such that the range of subjects and vocational courses both in school and with local partners is now good.

Teaching and learning in almost all lessons are at least satisfactory. In good lessons, students had clear learning objectives and tasks matched well to their differing abilities. Teaching assistants are effective, with good oversight by special educational needs managers ensuring that students with specific learning needs make good progress. In the best assessment practice, teachers accurately diagnosed what needed improving, wrote this on the students' work, and then gave time for the student to respond. This was not, however, a common feature of marking. Some teachers spent too long introducing the lesson, so missing the opportunity for all students to try out the ideas for themselves.

This inconsistency of practice in applying perfectly sound school policies is the main barrier to raising achievement beyond satisfactory. The school's senior leadership team is accurately aware of where practice is strong or weak, but these wide differences suggest inconsistencies in the effectiveness of routine monitoring by managers. Nevertheless, leadership and management are satisfactory, which has resulted in improvements in science, sixth form provision and much of the school buildings. The school has responded successfully to underperformance in GCSE mathematics, and is consequently demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to improve. The governing body has very good systems to monitor school performance and provision and take a direct role in holding school managers to account.

There has been a mixed impact of the school's specialist mathematics and computing status. There are good examples of the school working with the local community, including adult computer classes as well as work with primary schools for more able mathematicians. However, the school missed its mathematics academic targets in 2008, despite exceeding its information and communication technology targets. Inspectors did not see wide use of interactive whiteboard technology, despite the

majority of classrooms having that facility.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve academic progress and subsequently standards by:
  - ensuring consistent application of the school's behaviour policy in every lesson
  - making sure students always respond to regular, accurate diagnostic marking of their day-to-day work
  - planning tasks within lessons that challenge, interest and motivate the full range of abilities of all students
  - maximise opportunities for every student to engage independently in learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of managers at all levels in supporting and challenging staff and students to consistently operate school policies and strive for high standards of presentation and behaviour.

## How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

3
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Overall standards in public examinations in 2008 were broadly similar to national averages. The performance of the current Year 11 shows higher and more consistent grades when compared to last year's cohort at the same time of year. Science standards have also improved compared to the results achieved at the time of the previous inspection. The enjoyment and achievement of students is satisfactory. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. In almost all lessons observed, learning was satisfactory, and students attitudes often good. In a few lessons, teachers did not apply the school's behaviour management policy consistently, and accepted low-level disturbance without effectively stopping it.

Students enjoy school, and thanks to good catering and plenty of additional sporting activities, most are participating in a healthy lifestyle and all know what that entails. Many take part in the range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school. These include off-site trips and visits, sporting and performing arts events and opportunities to contribute to local and international charity work. The school council has a strong voice in guiding improvements to facilities, although the construction materials of older buildings limit what can be done. The behaviour of students is at its best where lessons are motivating and challenging, requiring their full attention and participation. Around school, they behave satisfactorily including when they are in the dining room, which shows an example of their generally good self-control. About two thirds of students eat school meals, which are healthy and provide a wide choice. Attendance is satisfactory overall, and the school works closely and

effectively with other agencies to tackle persistent absence. Students said that the school dealt swiftly with any instances of bullying.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	3
How well do pupils behave?	3
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	3

## The quality of the school's work

The wide range of teaching quality observed matched the school's own evaluations of teaching and learning. The best lessons started promptly, had clear objectives and plans that accommodated the different abilities of students. In the weakest lessons a delayed start and absence of effective planning caused students to become restless. Accurate diagnosis of students' work is, for the most part, common to all the day-to-day marking, but in most cases there is no expectation that students should respond. Therefore the good advice by teachers is going unanswered, and students are getting into the habit of taking no notice of the helpful, corrective comments. In a few cases work was not marked for several weeks and some very poor quality presentation ignored.

The curriculum addresses the statutory requirements for all students. There are some innovative changes in Year 7, which focus on academic as well as personal and social development and reduce the number of different teachers each child meets during the week. The school has also improved choice and diversity for the 14 to 19 age range, although the new Diplomas are not due to begin until September 2009. However, inspectors judge that, at the point of delivery in lessons, the curriculum content is not well-enough adapted to the different abilities and prior attainment of students in every case. In part, this is a result of an over-reliance on setting as the only tool for differentiation and one factor in the underperformance of two upper/middle ability maths groups last year.

A real strength of the school is its support, guidance and care for students of all

<sup>1</sup> Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

ages, abilities and backgrounds. This helps to ensure that vulnerable youngsters are able to make at least satisfactory and often good progress through their school journey. It also allows students to develop their own sense of empathy and responsibility towards one another. Students report good advice on the 'next steps' in their education. One factor in this high quality care and support is the level of monitoring and evaluation by the managers of the support unit, and the school's own special educational needs coordinators. Between them they ensure that appropriate resources are targeted at the most needy of students, but they also monitor the impact of this support and react swiftly to any signs of a problem.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	3
Effective assessment	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	3
Support, guidance and care	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

There is plenty of enthusiasm and drive amongst leaders and managers. They communicate their commitment to inclusion and equality for all students, and this has engendered a good sense of camaraderie amongst the staff. Although the school has no formal community cohesion strategy, students do develop a satisfactory understanding of local, national and international matters through lessons, community projects, and links with international schools, for example in The Gambia. Senior managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. The local authority has recently provided effective support for mathematics and English. The leadership of the specialist unit for children with complex learning difficulties, and the work of the school's special educational needs managers, is very strong. They track vulnerable students' progress closely, and ensure that the curriculum matches their academic and personal development needs.

Some parents and students said temporary staff taught too many lessons, although inspectors found no evidence of any significant concern. The school is currently managing an exceptional number of temporary staff well, and it is mindful of its employment duties for permanent staff who are taking medium-term leave of absence.

The governing body has very good systems to monitor school performance and provision, and takes a direct role in holding school managers to account. Their effective oversight of safeguarding policies is rigorous, and the school is fully compliant in all the necessary requirements for child protection. One innovative approach is a regular 'fresh eyes' health and safety walk-through of the school, which involves different staff and pupils.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	3
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	3
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	3
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	3

## Sixth form

The sixth form has recently moved into new accommodation, which has made a very positive impact upon the learning ethos of these students. There is a sense that, at last, the learning environment properly reflects the value the school has always placed on each learner. Sixth form students were universally enthusiastic about their school and very positive about the level of academic and personal support they receive from staff. The head of sixth form has established effective communication with department heads, so that she can resolve and improve quickly any learning concerns that students may have and support any students causing concern. Students feel she is an effective advocate on their behalf. As a result, standards in AS levels in 2008 rose sharply from previous years to just above average. Some subjects performed very well, although inconsistencies remained and overall, progress was securely satisfactory. A-level results in 2008 were just below average and reflected broadly average progress.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents who completed the questionnaires agreed with all the questions on the form. Many questionnaires arrived after the inspectors had completed their visit, but these have also been analysed and the views taken into account. Several parents wrote warmly about the quality of education and care received by their children. Some parents were particularly grateful for the effective support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, about a quarter of the returns raised some concerns about the effectiveness of the school in dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence suggests this is a consequence of some inconsistency in the application of the school behaviour policy.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- 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.

27 February 2009



Dear Students

Inspection of The Pingle School, Swadlincote, DE11 0QA

Thank you for your friendly welcome and positive responses to our questions during our inspection of your school recently. We agree with the school's own evaluation that this is a satisfactory school, where almost all of you can expect to make reasonable progress. Many features are improving, for example, the sixth form is showing better results for Year 12 students in 2008. We also know that students who find learning particularly challenging are doing much better than expected, thanks to the good support, guidance and care of your teachers and support staff. Almost all of you enjoy school, and say the school deals with your concerns, for example bullying, very well.

You make good progress where lessons match your own personal needs and interests, and then you demonstrate enthusiasm and independence in your learning. We did see a few examples where students did not fully engage with the task, and so became disinterested and slightly disruptive. Most teachers mark your work well, but we only found a few examples where you had responded to that marking by making corrections, extending the writing or re-drafting the work at a higher quality. You also say that teachers vary in how they deal with minor breaches of the school codes of conduct; smart wearing of uniform is one such example where practice and expectations vary. We therefore think that the school must become more consistent in applying its policies and, in turn, you can help by recognising that the school has high expectations of you including good presentation of your work and a positive response to advice and instruction.

These are the main points that the school will try to address in order to become a good school.

- Make sure staff and students consistently carry out school policies.
- Give you time to respond to written advice in the marking of your work.
- Plan lessons that match your interests and abilities and give you more opportunities for independent work

Best wishes for your future.

Yours faithfully

Brian Cartwright  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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