

Penn Fields School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104412
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	336301
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ken Morris
Headteacher	Ms Elaine Stanley (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2007
School address	Birches Barn Road Penn Fields Wolverhampton
Telephone number	01902 339786
Fax number	01902 831911
Email address	school@pennfields.biblio.net

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school's computerised assessment and tracking systems, digital portfolios of pupils' achievements, school policies, and records of safeguarding training. The Ofsted questionnaire responses from 51 parents were also examined.

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

- the achievement of different groups across the school to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- how consistently and effectively assessment is used to support the progress of all pupils
- how staff other than the senior managers are involved in the self-evaluation process
- examples of sustained improvements since the last inspection.

Information about the school

Penn Fields is a large special school serving the Wolverhampton area. At the time of the last inspection, it was designated as a school for moderate learning difficulties but has recently been redesignated as a school for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. A small minority of pupils have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities such as sensory impairments, varying degrees of autism, and medical needs. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average and all pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds and a small number are from minority ethnic groups, mostly from Asian backgrounds. Since the last inspection, the school has achieved the International Schools Award, Healthy Schools quality mark, Sportsmark, Activemark, the Quality in Extended Services award, the Leading Aspect award for improving teaching and learning through the use of information and communication technology (ICT), the DCSF Financial Management Standard in Schools, and it is recognised as a centre for good practice by the National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants. It has developed its extended services through SHARE, a parents support group, and makes joint 14-16 provision for BTEC in sport and leisure with Westcroft Sports College. An acting headteacher has been in place since October 2008 and an acting deputy headteacher since September 2009. The school is subject to reorganisation proposals in 2012 as part of the Building Schools for the Future initiative.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Penn Fields is an outstanding school which rightly deserves its strong reputation with parents and the community. Parents' views are reflected in such comments as, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds since moving to Penn Fields. The school pushes very hard to get the best from my child. Thank you Penn Fields!'

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and grow in confidence as they move through the school because of the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support provided for them. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are very clear about how to stay healthy. Their behaviour is outstanding and they feel very safe. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Support for learning is very good and promotes the good teaching effectively. Different groups of pupils, such as those with severe learning difficulties and pupils who are looked after by the local authority, make equally good progress and there are no significant differences in the progress between boys and girls. Teaching ensures that the needs of most groups of pupils are provided for well but in the minority of lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, progress is uneven because work is not always matched to the variety of learning needs. Very detailed assessment systems have been introduced since the last inspection, with good analysis of data. However, teachers' marking does not always show pupils the next steps to improve their learning. Behaviour is managed very effectively and teaching assistants provide very good support in nearly all lessons. The outstanding curriculum has continued to improve since the last inspection, with new partnership initiatives to enrich learning. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is outstanding and the welfare of learners is given the highest priority.

Senior managers are highly effective in moving the school forward and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development as a result of their effective monitoring of teaching and learning. The new governing body regularly visits the school, and is effective in monitoring its work and holding senior leaders to account. Good improvement in the key areas since the last inspection includes the development of some outstanding assessment systems which are used very well at whole school level to drive improvement. Middle leaders undertake some valuable monitoring. However, they do not check how well their subjects are planned and adapted in lessons to cater for the variety of different learning needs or how well teachers are using assessment to move learning on. Nevertheless, in view of the good improvement since the last inspection, good governance and the clear ambition of the senior leaders, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- – Ensure that middle managers make a greater contribution to the drive for improvement, by:
 - checking that teachers use assessment information more consistently in those lessons where teaching is currently satisfactory
 - checking that learning tasks, methods and resources are matched to the variety of needs in their subjects
 - monitoring the impact of marking on pupils' understanding of how to improve their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils make good progress and thoroughly enjoy their learning. The school's tracking and accurate analysis of progress shows that progress improves as pupils move through the school and that there are no significant differences in the progress of boys and girls or between particular groups of pupils. Good progress was seen in the majority of lessons and in some lessons progress was outstanding because work was matched precisely to learning needs and assessment was used extremely well to move pupils' learning forward. However, occasionally progress was satisfactory because learning tasks were not matched to pupils' individual needs. The oldest pupils make good progress in achieving a wide variety of accredited course including GCSE, BTEC and Certificates of Achievement.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in their growing confidence, their excellent relationships, their good attendance and their outstanding behaviour throughout the school. They are extremely kind and considerate to others, polite, helpful and courteous. Pupils stay very safe and know how to maintain healthy lifestyles. They make an outstanding contribution to the community through a wide range of fund raising events and by showing initiative and taking responsibility in school, through for example, the active school council, local community involvement and helping younger pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Good planning of lessons underpins good quality teaching, enabling pupils to learn effectively and make good progress. Strong teamwork, with very effective support by teaching assistants, has a positive impact on learning and pupils' personal development. In all lessons, relationships are excellent and behaviour is always managed effectively. Consequently, pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes have a positive impact on their learning as they always remain focused on their tasks. Resources, including the use of ICT, are nearly always well chosen and used effectively. Assessment is used effectively in most lessons, although learning tasks are not always matched to different needs and when pupils' work is marked, it does not always inform them how to develop their learning.

Pupils are given the opportunity to participate in a wealth of relevant and engaging learning experiences, both in and beyond the classroom. These include many clubs, residential trips and input from an impressively wide range of external agencies. Reflecting the school's philosophy of commitment to the individual child, all activities are planned to take account of individual needs and learning styles and when planning the curriculum, staff have a clear view of the necessary next steps in learning for each pupil. Primary aged pupils are taught predominantly by their class teachers, but have the benefit of specialist teacher input for literacy and mathematics lessons. Secondary pupils learn in well-resourced specialist rooms, much as they would in mainstream schools. All teachers are careful to maximise the promotion of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy whenever possible. Much good work has been undertaken to adapt the curriculum to ensure that the increasingly complex needs of pupils are properly met.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

This has been particularly important in relation to external accreditation, so that the learning of pupils of all abilities can be properly celebrated. All older pupils have the opportunity to undertake good quality work experience and college placements, to prepare them properly for the next stage of their learning, training and the world of work. The school makes very good use of partnerships with a number of other schools to provide enhanced subject coverage, opportunities for pupils to work alongside their mainstream peers and, in a very few cases, to prepare for eventual co-location on to another site. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is a central thread which runs through all subjects and contributes significantly to pupils' exceptional personal and social development.

Staff provide sensitive and very well focused pastoral support to ensure that pupils feel safe, happy and secure. Pupils very much appreciate this individual, straightforward attention and the difference this makes to their ability to benefit fully from the learning opportunities they are offered. Pupils and their parents are properly involved in setting and evaluating their progress against ambitious targets. There is a carefully structured approach to welcoming new pupils into the school and excellent academic and career guidance ensures that pupils make the right decisions for their transition into further education and adult life. The vital involvement of a welfare officer consolidates the school's excellent approach to nurturing and sustaining active and highly effective partnerships with parents and carers. Secure record-keeping reflects close monitoring for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff work extremely effectively with a wide range of care and support agencies. The Penn Fields outreach service is very highly regarded by schools across the authority. It makes a significant difference to the educational chances of mainstream pupils with special educational needs and disabilities through its advice and training for staff in those schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher provide outstanding leadership in driving the school forward and setting a clear direction for school improvement. They are effectively supported by the staff who are very committed to sustaining the school's excellent provision. This is evident in a number of new awards gained since the last inspection and the school's excellent reputation in the community. Senior leaders systematically monitor the quality of teaching and use the outcomes of their lesson

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

observations to influence their highly accurate evaluation of the school's work. Middle leaders are also using the highly accurate tracking data to monitor the progress pupils are making and use the outcomes to influence planning. However, they are not monitoring the impact of teaching on the learning and progress of particular groups of pupils effectively enough to ensure that tasks, methods or resources are always matched to the learning needs of pupils.

School leaders ensure that pupils have equally good opportunities to participate in all aspects of the curriculum and rigorously tackles any discrimination. The school promotes community cohesion well. Outstanding partnerships with local schools and the community provide excellent opportunities for pupils to integrate and mix with their peers, which has a very positive impact on their personal development. The school fully meets all safeguarding requirements through its excellent systems for ensuring the welfare and safety of pupils and its most effective procedures for checking the suitability of staff, governors and regular visitors. Excellent relationships and partnerships with parents, particularly through the 'SHARE' initiative, have led to very positive support for the school and provides parents with excellent opportunities to gain qualifications in parenting skills.

Good governance ensures that the school is effectively supported and held to account for its work. Governors visit the school regularly and take the views of parents, staff and pupils seriously. They ensure that all statutory requirements are fully met, and are strongly committed to school development. Prudent financial management and careful strategic planning promote outstanding pupil outcomes and ensures the school provides excellent value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Views of parents and carers

By the end of the inspection, 51 parents returned questionnaires. The response to the questionnaire is logged in the table below. Nearly all questionnaires received were fully supportive of the school. A few parents expressed concern about different aspect such as behaviour, homework and the effect of home tuition on learning. Inspectors found no evidence to support these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Penn Fields School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 159 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	64	16	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	70	13	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	66	15	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	57	19	40	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	68	13	28	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	60	17	36	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	62	16	34	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	25	53	16	34	3	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	64	15	32	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	57	17	36	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	60	16	34	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	64	15	32	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	66	14	30	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penn Fields School, Wolverhampton, WV3

Thank you for telling me all about your wonderful school and for being so kind and helpful to me when I inspected your school. I was very pleased with your excellent behaviour and how well you get along with each other. I really enjoyed visiting your lessons where I saw how hard you were working and the good progress you were making. I also enjoyed having lunch with you and watching how pleased you were to receive awards for your hard work during your achievement assembly. I am writing now to tell you what I found out about your school.

You go to an excellent school with outstanding opportunities for you to learn different things. You are extremely well cared for and feel very safe in school. Teachers from your school who help other schools have an excellent reputation and your parents, staff and governors are very supportive of your school. You make good progress because teaching is mostly good or excellent. Sometimes you do not make so much progress because when your books are marked you are not always shown how to improve your learning and the tasks you are given are not always matched to what you need to learn next.

Your headteacher and the other staff want to make the school even better for you. I want to help them with this and so I have asked them to:

- make sure that teachers who look after subjects check that you all have tasks which are challenging and which you can do, and that when your work is marked it shows you how to improve your learning.

Keep on trying your best.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.