

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Penketh High School

Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington, Cheshire WA5 2BY

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Inspection dates:

20 and 21 May 2025

## Outcome

Penketh High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is John Carlin. The school is part of The Challenge Academy Trust, which means that other people also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Andy Moorcroft, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Howard Platt.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this inclusive community. They feel safe when they are in school. They know who to speak to if they are worried or upset. Pupils enjoy good, warm relationships with staff and leaders.

Most pupils live up to the school's high expectations about behaviour. They behave well in lessons and around school. The corridors are busy but ordered when pupils and staff move from lesson to lesson. Once lessons begin, a calm atmosphere descends and learning quickly resumes in the classrooms.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. Staff are determined that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), gain the knowledge and skills that they need to thrive in their future lives. In many subjects, pupils achieve well.

All pupils attend enrichment lessons, which take place during the school day. Pupils are keen to select from a very wide range of activities. Each activity is designed to develop one of the 10 key skills which the school has identified as necessary for pupils to live safe, rewarding and happy lives. As a result, pupils can speak confidently about skills such as teamwork, staying positive and being creative. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. At key stage 3, leaders have carefully considered, across all subjects, the content that needs to be taught in order to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education. In 2024, some Year 11 pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, did not make the progress of which they were capable in a few subjects. The school has responded to these outcomes with speed and success. Changes to the design and delivery of the curriculum in these subjects mean that current key stage 4 pupils know and remember more of the essential knowledge they need to learn.

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. They have benefited from professional development sessions, which have introduced them to a wide range of effective teaching strategies to use in the classroom. They apply these well in their lessons. The school has carefully thought about the best way for teachers to check pupils' learning. However, the impact of these changes is variable in a small number of subjects. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are sometimes not identified or addressed quickly enough. Consequently, some pupils miss out on important aspects of the key knowledge they need to master.

The school identifies pupils with SEND accurately. It has provided staff with training on the most appropriate methods to support these pupils in lessons. Pupils with SEND progress well through the same ambitious curriculum as their peers because staff are effective in adapting their teaching to the needs of pupils.

Improving pupils' reading is a priority. The school accurately identifies pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge and has systems in place to rectify those gaps. In addition, all pupils benefit from a well-structured reading curriculum, which broadens their vocabulary and provides them with additional skills to strengthen their ability to read difficult texts. As a result, the vast majority of pupils become fluent and confident readers over time.

The school has also prioritised raising attendance. For most pupils, the school's strategies have been very effective. Consequently, overall attendance rates have improved over the past two years. Pastoral leaders work closely with those pupils and their families who struggle to attend school regularly, engaging with other agencies if necessary. However, there remains a small minority of pupils, some of whom are disadvantaged, who do not attend school often enough. This hinders their learning.

Typically, pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. This is because staff are consistent in their use of the clear systems in place to manage and improve poor behaviour.

Pupils follow a very well-designed programme of lessons and activities to promote their personal development. A multitude of opportunities are woven through the curriculum and through the school's extensive and inclusive enrichment programme. These opportunities help pupils to blossom into well-rounded and confident individuals. Pupils

from Year 7 onwards benefit from a high-quality careers programme which introduces them to the skills they will need in the workplace.

Trustees and members of the local governing body are very well informed about the school's priorities. They support school leaders as well as holding them to account for the education that pupils receive. Trustees, local governors and school leaders at all levels take staff's workload and well-being into consideration when making policy decisions. As a result, staff feel valued and appreciate the support they receive.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The impact of teachers' assessment strategies is variable across a small number of subjects. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are sometimes not identified or addressed quickly enough. The school should ensure that its work to check pupils' learning helps them to achieve as well as they should across all subjects.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145157
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	10379980
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1019
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Howard Platt
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Andy Moorcroft
<b>Principal</b>	John Carlin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.penkethhigh.org">www.penkethhigh.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	25 and 26 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT).
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of staff.

- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes and spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.
- An inspector met with representatives of the governing body. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust and reviewed minutes of recent trust board meetings.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took into account the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Timothy Gartside, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Barker	Ofsted Inspector

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