

Pentland Field School

Pentland Way, Ickenham, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB10 8TS

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have risen to the challenges that a rapidly expanding school generates. They have secured strong and stable teaching, good progress and outstanding personal development for all pupils.
- Trustees, members of the local advisory board and the director for schools provide a strong steer for leaders. They use their considerable experience and expertise within the trust to ensure that the school continues to develop both in numbers and in its performance.
- Senior leaders are excellent role models for staff. They constantly innovate and implement new ways of working. This has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- All groups of pupils make good progress, including in English and mathematics. Their communication skills are promoted exceptionally well.
- Teamwork is a real strength of the school. Teachers, support staff and therapists meet regularly to share their observations about how well pupils are achieving.
- Pupils' welfare and safety are given precedence over all other factors. Staff work closely with parents, carers and professionals to make sure that help and support are provided swiftly. As a result, pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils rapidly gain self-control and independence. There is consistent and instant recognition for pupils who adhere to the school's six golden rules for good behaviour.
- Teaching usually meets pupils' individual needs well. Teachers plan work which interests and motivates pupils to want to achieve their best.
- The early years foundation stage is good, because these children have the same strong provision as other pupils in the school.
- The most able pupils, including older pupils, are not typically stretched in their thinking. This is because work is sometimes too easy.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write in subjects other than in English.
- Leaders have designed a new curriculum and assessment process. Both provide teachers with greater insight into what pupils can do.
- However, assessments linked to the national standards are not always accurate. The school has yet to assess foundation subjects and the progress that the most able pupils make.
- Secondary-aged pupils follow a narrow curriculum pathway. The most able pupils do not achieve what they are capable of, including being able to study accredited courses in English and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure strong and sustained progress in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - assessment information is used effectively to pitch work at the right level of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils in English and mathematics
 - pupils are always set aspirational targets
 - those pupils who finish their work quickly have additional activities to extend and deepen their learning
 - pupils develop and extend their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Sharpen up leadership and management by:
 - assessing pupils' progress in all subjects, as well as for the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils
 - making sure that all assessments are accurate
 - providing an extended curriculum pathway for older pupils so that they have the opportunity to study accredited courses, including in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Following a period of rapid expansion, leaders have secured stability and substantial improvements since the school opened. The journey of the school, in the words of the chief executive officer for the trust, 'has been a rollercoaster'.
- This track record of success demonstrates the strong capacity of senior leaders to make further improvements. They have already secured good teaching and achievement, as well as outstanding personal development for all groups of learners.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils and staff. They are effective role models, always looking to find even better ways of working to benefit all. There is a cycle of testing out new ideas, such as promoting pupils' phonics knowledge in specific year groups, then rolling this out to boost pupils' reading and writing skills across all key stages.
- Senior leaders, including directors and members of the local advisory board, have secured a shared understanding and commitment by all to strive for excellence. They promote a harmonious and positive culture for learning, where pupils behave exceptionally well. This has a significant impact on pupils' learning and personal development.
- Middle leaders are new to their leadership responsibilities. Senior leaders provide them with effective guidance in monitoring their phases. The school is fully aware that their work has yet to have a sustained impact on some aspects of the school's performance.
- Leaders monitor all elements of the school's work; they know what is working well and what needs to be focused on next. Good use is made of the considerable expertise across the trust. Centralised professional development complements the school's own training, to address individual staff's needs as well as whole-school priorities. Previous poor performance has been tackled decisively. Teaching staff, including teaching assistants, are set ambitious targets to improve their performance. This has secured good and sometimes outstanding teaching.
- Both teachers and support staff feel very well supported. They network closely with their colleagues in school and across the trust. Staff appreciate and act on the guidance they receive from leaders. Coaching forms a major aspect of professional development. As a result, staff morale is high.
- Leaders have grasped the nettle and designed a new assessment system, which provides a much more detailed picture of pupils' abilities, linked to a broader and deeper curriculum. However, some assessments require further moderation to secure greater accuracy, particularly for the most able pupils who are working at national curriculum levels.
- Although assessments are used to set personalised targets, the most able pupils' targets are not aspirational enough to secure rapid rates of progress. Leaders have yet to track separately the progress that the most able pupils make, or to assess the progress that pupils make in science and in the foundation subjects. As a consequence, they are not able to evaluate confidently how well the most able pupils are achieving,

or the progress that all pupils are making across the curriculum.

- The curriculum has been reviewed to secure mastery in the core subjects. It is planned well to meet the needs, abilities and interests of most pupils, promoting pupils' literacy skills, including communication and language, effectively. This is particularly so for Reception children, and primary-aged pupils. The curriculum for pupils with severe learning difficulties has also been improved, promoting their communication, thinking, sensory and physical skills well.
- However, the curriculum pathway is too narrow for some older pupils. Pupils, including the most able pupils, are not as yet able to study accredited courses in English and mathematics, including functional skills and GCSEs.
- Additional visits and visitors enhance learning strongly, including a two-day residential camping trip for older pupils. Funds for disadvantaged primary pupils are used to pay for them to attend a variety of after-school clubs.
- Leaders ensure that all funds are used judiciously. Interventions provide intensive support to remove barriers to learning.
- The sports premium funding is used to extend the range of sporting opportunities and to increase participation. Pupils benefit from high-quality teaching, which develops their sports talents and also strong social and communication skills.

Governance of the school

- There are clear lines of leadership and management responsibility. The board of trustees has statutory responsibility for governance of the school. The role of the local governing body has recently been revised. As a local advisory board, it provides an effective balance of challenge and focused solutions for the school. The director for schools is line-managed by the chief executive officer. As a result, leaders at all levels are held fully to account for their specific remits.
- Trustees and members of the local advisory board have significant expertise and use this, as well as their own observations, to ask leaders relevant and probing questions about the impact of their work. As a consequence, they have a great insight into, and understanding of, the school's effectiveness. This contributes significantly to the trend of rapid improvement in all key areas. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that the lightning speed of change means that there now needs to be a period of consolidation.
- Directors and members of the local advisory board hold leaders and staff to account for the quality of teaching and progress of pupils. They swiftly challenge leaders about the progress made towards the school's priorities. This includes finding out the reasons why a small minority of pupils have not met their aspirational targets, and whether additional funds for them have been spent wisely.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and staff are uncompromising in their determination to keep pupils safe. Regular training ensures that all staff are keenly aware of any potential risks and are fully up to date with current government legislation, including the school's response to

the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation.

- Staff refer immediately to the designated safeguarding lead and deputies, who in turn refer to the appropriate authorities. Staff forge highly effective partnerships with parents, including the family services coordinator. This means that staff are vigilant in spotting possible concerns. They contribute a great deal to eliminating or reducing a potential crisis at home. As a result, parents are offered early help and advice, including signposting to relevant external agencies. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the support and guidance they receive from the school. Pupils are kept safe and secure from harm.
- Trustees fulfil their statutory responsibilities proficiently. They make sure that there is a coordinated and consistent application of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. This includes all vetting checks when recruiting staff, to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. The trustee with specific responsibility for safeguarding regularly checks the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures, meeting regularly with the safeguarding lead and deputies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and support staff work seamlessly together so that pupils learn well in small groups. Adults have a good understanding of pupils' needs, abilities and interests.
- Pupils' communication and language skills are given the highest priority. Trained speech and language teaching assistants provide daily activities to extend pupils' communication skills, including their vocabulary and comprehension. As a consequence, all pupils, including those pupils who speak English as an additional language, make rapid gains.
- Adults are skilled in asking the right questions to refocus pupils' attention, to clarify their thinking and to deepen pupils' understanding. They constantly reinforce what pupils are learning about, breaking down activities into small and achievable steps. Those pupils who are easily distracted are gently but firmly encouraged to re-engage. As a result, pupils remain on task for most of the time and learn effectively.
- A range of strategies are used to support pupils' learning, including symbols, electronic devices and visual, auditory and sensory prompts which reinforce pupils' learning.
- Activities are well thought out so that pupils practise several skills concurrently, in relevant and interesting situations. For example, older pupils write recipes, purchase ingredients at a local shop, calculate how much they need to pay, then weigh and cook different meals. Learning has meaning for pupils and they remain focused and interested as a result.
- However, some activities, including in English and mathematics, are too easy for the most able pupils. There are instances where these pupils complete the same work as other pupils, such as spelling simple words when they are capable of writing sentences on their own. Equally, these pupils often complete their work quickly and have no additional work to stretch their thinking. This wastes vital learning time and slows their progress down.
- Although pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills are promoted daily, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects. As a result, progress in this

subject is not as rapid as it could be.

- Staff are adept in managing pupils' behaviour positively. There are very strong relationships, because pupils put implicit trust in their key worker, thus promoting their self-esteem and self-worth. As a consequence, learning proceeds in a calm and purposeful manner.
- Parents are kept fully informed about how well their children are doing. Daily communication journals, where staff and parents share information about pupils' experiences, are supplemented through regular informal and formal discussions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders and staff put pupils' personal development and welfare at the very centre of their work. There is total commitment to ensuring that pupils and their families are exceptionally well supported. As a result, pupils thrive in school.
- The school works closely with parents to raise their aspirations for their children's life chances beyond school. Equally, parents are guided to access a range of external therapeutic support for their children.
- Pupils develop their communication skills, concentration, self-awareness and self-expression through a range of therapies, strengthening their emotional well-being. This has a significant impact on their learning and progress.
- Independent careers advice and guidance are good. Leaders work closely with an external provider, which includes discussions on the internet for pupils. This opens up a range of possible career pathways for older pupils to aspire to when they leave school.
- Pupils are keen to contribute to their local community and beyond. All pupils are members of the school council. They meet regularly to discuss key issues, including priorities identified in the school development plan. This promotes pupils' communication skills, independence and sense of responsibility.
- Older pupils undertake work experience in school, providing them with a sense of responsibility, independence and achievement. Pupils willingly raise funds for different charities. As a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed effectively.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet, as well as what constitutes inappropriate behaviour towards others, including all forms of bullying. The personal, social and health education programme promotes pupils' understanding of how to keep healthy, interact positively with others and live in the wider world.
- Parents appreciate the guidance the school offers them. Parental workshops cover a range of issues, from toilet training to e-safety. Parents have every confidence that the school keeps their children safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff implement the revised behaviour policy consistently. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Every opportunity is used to recognise and celebrate when pupils are trying hard, thus promoting excellent behaviour patterns.
- This consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour secures pupils' excellent conduct and very positive attitudes to learning. Over a short period of time, pupils make remarkable progress in managing their own behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to make choices in their learning, thereby developing their independence, confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils usually listen carefully to adults and to each other. They display kindness and consideration to one another.
- Staff are skilled in spotting potential triggers which may disturb some pupils. Staff use avoidance tactics effectively to reduce pupils' anxiety levels. This includes working on a one-to-one basis in a quiet area or room. Those pupils with challenging behaviours are supported well through personalised behaviour programmes.
- The majority of pupils attend school regularly, which is a significant improvement for many of them who had previous low attendance. Leaders work closely with external agencies and parents, following up any absences with vigour. External exclusions are exceptionally rare. The school does not use any form of internal exclusion.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' starting points when they start school vary significantly. Many have huge gaps in their learning. All pupils have skill levels which are well below those expected for their age.
- Pupils' abilities are assessed carefully, including an in-depth analysis of their speech and language skills. This detailed information is used as the foundation for personalised learning pathways.
- The new assessment procedure is enabling teachers to build up a much clearer picture of pupils' strengths and next steps. Any pupil at risk of underachieving is swiftly identified, with intensive one-to-one support put in place. Potential gaps are minimised.
- Inspection observations confirm some inconsistencies in the accuracy of the national curriculum assessments. Nonetheless, evidence, including work in pupils' books, demonstrates that all groups of pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. This includes disadvantaged pupils, those pupils who speak English as an additional language, and younger children.
- The recent focus on developing pupils' reading skills is ensuring that pupils who are able to, read widely. Early reading skills, including phonics, provide pupils with an increasing ability to read unfamiliar words accurately. Reading corners in each classroom and regular opportunities to read for pleasure promote pupils' love of reading well.
- In 2016/17, there were no Year 11 pupils. This year, three Year 11 pupils are studying

four ASDAN courses. The lack of accredited courses means that a growing number of the most able pupils in key stages 3 and 4 will currently not be able to achieve their full potential.

- Most pupils are well prepared academically, emotionally and socially for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Early years provision

Good

- There were too few Reception children to comment on their achievement or behaviour as this would identify individual children.
- The key strengths and most of the recommendations identified in this report for older pupils apply to this group of children.
- Each child follows an individualised curriculum tailored to their needs, interests and abilities, based on the early years foundation stage statutory requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	141606
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	10041953

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

Type of school	All-through special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Barry Nolan (chair of the trustees), Laura Cunningham (chair of the local advisory board)
Headteacher	Jarlath O'Brien (director for schools), Audrey Pantelis (head of school)
Telephone number	01895 609 120
Website	www.pentlandfieldschool.co.uk
Email address	info@pentlandfieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Pentland Field School opened in January 2015 as a special free school.
- It is one of five special schools in north-west London which make up Eden Academy. It is overseen by the board of trustees and directors. It is led and managed by its own head of school and local advisory board.
- There are 137 pupils on roll, all of whom have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils have a wide range of needs, including moderate and severe learning difficulties as well as autistic spectrum conditions.
- Almost one in two pupils are disadvantaged. This is much higher than the national average. Pupils are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest proportion

being White British.

- More pupils join the school at various stages of their education than is usual. Currently there are two Reception-aged children who attend a primary class. There is an increasing number of pupils joining the secondary phase.
- There are no post-16 students.
- The school does not make use of any other alternative provision.
- The school benefits from a wide range of expertise within the multi-academy trust.
- As the school grows, new teachers are appointed. The director for schools joined the trust in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Accompanied by senior leaders, inspectors observed the quality of teaching and learning in most classes. An additional learning walk was undertaken.
- Inspectors selected samples of pupils' work for scrutiny and for individual case studies in a range of subject areas and year groups.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the director of schools and head of school, as well as middle leaders, a group of teachers, support staff, therapists and the safeguarding and inclusion team.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the board of trustees, and the chair of the local advisory board.
- A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the Department for Education.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and with parents who attended a coffee morning.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documentation, including records of attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, staff development and pupils' progress, as well as a range of policies and reports on the school's website.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, so inspectors examined the school's most recent parental survey. Inspectors considered 49 responses to the staff questionnaire and 10 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jean Thwaites

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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