Inspection of an outstanding school: The Pendlebury Centre

Edgeley Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, Cheshire SK3 0RJ

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 June 2023

Outcome

The Pendlebury Centre continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Pendlebury Centre transforms pupils' lives. Pupils, and their families, are typically in crisis when pupils join the school. Pupils have significant social, emotional and mental health needs. Prior to joining this school, the vast majority of pupils have not attended school or engaged in any learning for a long period of time. This school is a lifeline for them. Staff go to extraordinary lengths to ensure that pupils receive the care and support that they need to flourish and succeed in their education.

Leaders and teachers set high expectations for each pupil's learning and behaviour. They carefully adapt the curriculum for each individual to enable them to succeed. Leaders skilfully challenge pupils, setting small steps of learning that are matched precisely to their needs and abilities. Pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Staff and pupils treat each other with mutual respect and kindness. Pupils understand that their peers have also suffered traumatic experiences. They use this shared understanding to support each other. Pupils are confident that their school is a place of safety. They feel accepted and valued. Leaders and staff deal with any issues, such as bullying, swiftly and effectively.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular experiences, which are an integral part of their placement. For example, they enjoy gardening club, art therapy and reading groups.

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

Governors, leaders and staff have a shared vision for pupils at this school. They intend that every pupil will reintegrate successfully into education. They have designed an ambitious curriculum that enables pupils to realise leaders' vision. The curriculum is carefully considered so that all pupils can maximise their learning in the short period of time that they stay at this school.

Subject leaders work closely with teachers in the mainstream schools that pupils attend. These leaders gather a range of academic information so that they are clear about pupils' individual starting points. They ensure that they identify the important subject knowledge pupils need to learn and the order in which this should be taught. Teachers frequently check on pupils' knowledge so that they establish and address any gaps and misconceptions in pupils' learning. This helps pupils to build their confidence and understanding in areas in which they have fallen behind. Leaders and staff relentlessly focus on the needs, aspirations and interests of individual pupils to ensure that they are well prepared for their next steps. The vast majority of pupils in Years 7 to 10 successfully reintegrate into their mainstream school or move on to suitable specialist provision. Year 11 pupils follow a highly personalised curriculum, which is broad and ambitious. These pupils gain the qualifications that they need to successfully move on to post-16 education or training.

All pupils in this school have an identified special educational need and/or disability. Many pupils also have an education, health and care plan. Leaders work closely with external agencies and families to identify and assess pupils' additional needs. They secure specialist advice and support when necessary. Teachers prioritise getting to know the needs of pupils. They are adept at adapting their teaching so that all pupils access the same ambitious curriculum.

Reading is prioritised and encouraged. For example, each year group engages in reading activities during tutor times. When pupils join the school, leaders accurately assess pupils' reading knowledge. They provide appropriate targeted support to improve pupils' reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension.

Leaders ensure that the school is a safe haven for pupils. Adults model calm and supportive behaviours at all times. Pupils replicate this behaviour. Pupils actively support each other's well-being. Pupils celebrate each other's achievements. Pupils are able to learn without any distractions.

Leaders and teachers have designed a wide range of well-considered programmes to support pupils' wider development. Pupils receive specialist targeted support for their social, emotional and mental health needs. In addition, enrichment activities and employer engagement opportunities are meticulously planned and tailored to individual pupil's interests, talents and aspirations. All pupils benefit from tailored careers advice and guidance. Pupils told inspectors that these opportunities had given them a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Governors provide strong support and rigorous challenge to school leaders so that the quality of education remains at the highest standard. Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the consideration that leaders have for their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of care and vigilance. All staff are highly trained to support the needs of the vulnerable pupils who attend the school. They are alert to the slightest concern. Staff robustly report and record incidents. Leaders liaise regularly with the mainstream schools that pupils attend to gather and share important information that supports pupils' transitions. Staff have daily briefings to update them about individual pupils.

Leaders work hand in hand with a range of external agencies. This enables them to secure timely specialist support for pupils and their families. For example, on entry, all pupils meet individually with healthcare professionals to identify any potential concerns about their physical health.

Pupils receive information about keeping themselves safe. For example, they learn about online safety, and they receive age-appropriate sex and relationships education.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in March 2013.

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' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	106022
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10226074
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Naomi Roussak
Headteacher	Jane Maxey
Website	www.pendlebury.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Pendlebury Centre provides specialist alternative provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils remain dual-registered with their mainstream school, and the majority attend this school part time for a maximum of 12 weeks. Almost all pupils return to full-time education in their mainstream school.
- Each year, a number of pupils attend the school as their main provision for the whole of Year 11, and they sit their GCSE examinations at the school.
- The school has a separate specialist provision for pupils with significant mental health needs. This provision is called Cedars. This provision caters for a maximum of six pupils. This provision is located on the same site as the main school.
- The school provides outreach support as part of a multi-agency health team, which works as part of Stockport's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.
- The current headteacher was appointed to the school 22 months ago.
- There have been a number of new governors recently appointed to the governing body.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, and a range of staff. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector spoke to representatives from the local authority.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science and personal, social and health education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from a range of year groups. Inspectors also observed pupils at social times.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation documents, external quality assurance documents and attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors checked on the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils, and governors to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in school.
- An inspector spoke to a headteacher from a mainstream school that has some pupils who attend this school.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in their responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments. The lead inspector met with a group of parents to discuss their views and experiences.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff to discuss leaders' support for their well-being and workload.

Inspection team

Amanda Downing, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Niamh Howlett	His Majesty's Inspector

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