

Peacehaven Community School

Greenwich Way, Peacehaven, East Sussex BN10 8RB

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a rapidly improving school, because of the effective partnership between leaders from the school, the interim executive board (IEB) and Swale Academies Trust.
- Governance is highly effective. Members of the IEB use their experience and expertise to the best advantage of the school. They monitor the school closely and provide effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have driven improvement relentlessly. Their determination, and the positive ethos they have created, is helping to promote further improvement.
- Staff and pupils benefit from the professional development and shared opportunities available through the trust. Staff are keen to learn and to refine their practice.
- Senior leadership is effective. Middle leaders are committed to enabling further improvement and are developing well. Leaders at all levels embrace new responsibilities.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, which is now good overall. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching. Not all pupils are supported or challenged enough to think deeply and explain ideas precisely, particularly the most able pupils.
- In the past, pupils have not made enough progress. However, better teaching over the last two years means that recent outcomes have improved. Overall, current pupils make good progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress. However, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils have not achieved as well as they should.
- The curriculum and enrichment activities promote pupils' development well. Careers education, advice and guidance are strengths. Additions to the curriculum are promoting greater levels of aspiration for some pupils and their families. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities
- Pupils' behaviour has significantly improved since the last inspection. Most pupils work diligently and respond well to clear and consistent routines.
- Overall attendance is below the national average. Leaders are working to reduce pupils' absence and there are signs of attendance improving. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains too low.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the attendance of pupils who are regularly absent from school, especially disadvantaged pupils.
- Continue to raise achievement across the school, particularly that of disadvantaged and the most able pupils.
- Improve the consistency and strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers challenge all pupils, particularly the most able pupils, to think deeply and learn more
 - teaching develops pupils' vocabulary across the curriculum, so that they can express what they know and understand accurately.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher, leaders and staff throughout the school have worked with determination to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Their actions have led to notable improvements across the school, securing good standards of teaching and behaviour. Capacity for further improvement is evident.
- The head of school has added impetus to the rate of improvement since she took up her post in September 2018. An effective transition period during the summer term, alongside the previous headteacher, helped a smooth handover.
- Leaders identify the school's strengths accurately. They know which aspects of the school need to improve most urgently and are taking useful steps to tackle them.
- The Swale Academies Trust gives effective support and challenge to the school's leaders. The executive headteacher works closely with school leaders to offer his own astute advice and ensure that leaders benefit from the wider expertise within the trust. The trust has successfully recruited, developed and retained high-quality leaders, teachers and other staff. Strong links with other secondary schools in the trust have enabled leaders and teachers to improve their skills.
- Throughout the school, staff are hard-working and committed to ensuring that pupils thrive, feel safe and achieve well. Pupils and staff are proud of improvements at the school. The learning environment is well kept and provides a secure and stimulating place for pupils to learn and develop.
- Staff are supportive of leaders' vision and appreciate the range of training and professional development opportunities. Newly qualified teachers and those new to the school are particularly well supported.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has strengthened since the last inspection. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well. The SENCo identifies and implements suitable provision so that these pupils make good progress. She checks the impact of strategies used and, where necessary, changes the response until the pupil makes the desired progress.
- Previously, leaders have not used additional funding effectively to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have recently sharpened their analysis of how this funding is used, leading to more focused actions to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. There are some early positive signs of the impact of these changes.
- Additional funding for pupils who need to catch up with their literacy and numeracy is used effectively. The majority of pupils involved with this work make accelerated progress with their English and mathematics.
- The curriculum supports the academic and personal development of pupils effectively. Leaders have worked successfully with parents and pupils to raise the ambitions of groups of pupils in Years 8 and 9 through additional enrichment activities and the introduction of more academic subjects into key stage 3. However, disadvantaged

pupils are underrepresented in the group of pupils benefiting from these opportunities to broaden their horizons.

- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and is embedded throughout the curriculum, particularly through personal, social, health and economic education lessons. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the successful promotion of British values across the curriculum and a strong sense of equality.
- A low proportion of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Of those who did respond, nearly nine out of 10 would recommend the school to other parents.
- The local authority provides good support through leadership coaching and membership of the IEB.

Governance of the school

- The IEB makes a highly effective contribution to the overall leadership of the school.
- IEB members are suitably skilled and experienced in their role. They understand the school very well, visiting regularly to test out what leaders tell them about improvements, priorities and challenges. They recognise accurately where standards in the school are secure and where they most urgently need to improve.
- The IEB provides useful challenge to school leaders about the impact of their work. Its members monitor pupils' achievements carefully and precisely to ensure that they are sufficiently strong. They hold senior leaders to account effectively for the impact of their work on pupils' outcomes, attendance and behaviour. They share leaders' high aspirations for the school.
- Members of the IEB understand their legal duties with regard to safeguarding. They make careful checks to ensure that policies and leaders' records are fit for purpose.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong culture of safeguarding permeates the school. IEB members and staff are appropriately trained and know their responsibilities well. Staff are vigilant and promote an environment where pupils trust and can talk to adults.
- Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding work is supported effectively by the systems and structures that are in place. Staff keep careful records of any concerns they may have about a pupil. Leaders take prompt action to follow these up in an appropriate way.
- Leaders show an impressive knowledge and understanding of the individual needs of vulnerable pupils and their home circumstances. They are alert to local and national risks and ensure that staff are trained accordingly. The school works successfully with external agencies for the benefit of vulnerable pupils, and leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the support they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved over time, as teachers have developed their skills well. Teachers show strong subject knowledge and have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. The atmosphere in most classrooms is purposeful. Teachers know their pupils well and build effective relationships, which helps pupils to learn and achieve.
- Leaders have established consistent routines that support learning in lessons. In almost all classes, pupils are prepared to work hard. Teachers plan a range of interesting activities and most pupils engage well across a range of subjects.
- Where teaching leads to good progress, it takes close account of pupils' individual starting points and uses effective strategies to meet their needs. On a few occasions, when teaching is less effective, teachers do not consistently set work at an appropriate level. Sometimes, the most able pupils are not given challenging tasks and do not make the progress they are capable of. At other times, pupils are presented with tasks that they are not equipped to tackle.
- Questioning by teachers is variable. Sometimes it probes pupils' knowledge and understanding carefully. On other occasions, teachers move on to the next task without fully challenging pupils' responses. This limits pupils' opportunities to think more deeply or apply their learning in unfamiliar contexts.
- The school's focus on developing literacy skills is helping pupils to make stronger progress. Reading has a high priority and the library is well used. Pupils are given opportunities in many subjects to write in an extended way. However, teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils' vocabulary is sufficiently ambitious. There is a renewed focus on improving spelling, although both teachers' and pupils' responses to leaders' expectations for correcting work are inconsistent.
- Teachers use the school's feedback system consistently to give advice and guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. In most cases, this advice is effective in targeting specific skills that pupils need to develop. However, in some cases, the advice given is not precise enough to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders have successfully raised the profile of homework across the school this year, following the school's policy. Pupils value the new approach, saying that it complements their learning in lessons well.
- Leaders have put beneficial support in place to improve the small minority of lessons where they judge teaching to be less effective. This is leading to ongoing improvements in the overall quality of teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils are supported well by pastoral staff. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are strong. Staff know pupils well and are alert to any difficulties pupils may be experiencing.
- Pupils who attend provision off-site are monitored closely to make sure that they are attending, achieving well and safe. School staff liaise regularly with staff at the alternative provision.
- Careers education and guidance are strengths of the school, being well led and managed. Leaders have devised a programme to raise pupils' awareness of the range of opportunities available to them. For example, pupils visit universities and have talks from outside speakers who are helping to raise pupils' aspirations.
- A few parents and pupils have lingering concerns about some pupils' behaviour and remaining bullying. However, pupils told inspectors that staff act swiftly and effectively to stop any bullying that does happen.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are proud of their school. The vast majority of pupils are polite and welcoming.
- Staff have transformed the atmosphere in the school through raising expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils appreciate the clear rules that are now in place and the consistency with which teachers apply them. As a result, most pupils conduct themselves well as a matter of course.
- The majority of pupils are keen and attentive in class. The school's focus on literacy, alongside high expectations of mutual respect, encourages pupils to listen well to each other's views and opinions. Pupils work well together. When teaching does not sustain the interests of pupils, the behaviour of a minority deteriorates.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to reduce the number of instances of negative behaviour, including those leading to pupils being excluded from school. They look at patterns in misbehaviour and make effective use of alternative strategies to encourage pupils to make more positive choices. Consequently, incidents of poor behaviour, and exclusions, have reduced over time.
- Leaders have made improvements to the way they deal with poor attendance. Staff are tireless in their efforts to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. They work closely with families to tackle persistent absence from school. As a result, rates of persistent absence have reduced. However, overall attendance remains below the national average and the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils remains too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils have improved during the last two years and are now good overall. Current pupils make good progress across most subjects, including in English and mathematics. This is due to the improvements to teaching and learning and the effective support to help older pupils to catch up from a legacy of underachievement.

- GCSE results for 2017 showed that pupils' progress and overall attainment scores were below the national averages. Provisional information about the 2018 GCSE results indicates that pupils' achievement in many subject areas improved and overall progress is in line with the national average. However, the attainment of the most able pupils and the progress of disadvantaged pupils remain below national averages.
- Leaders are unwavering in their determination to improve academic outcomes. The school's most recent performance information shows rapid improvement, particularly in Year 11. Overall, boys' progress is lower than that of girls. School leaders have focused on improving boys' outcomes, and their analysis of boys' performance shows they are beginning to catch up with girls.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points. Pupils supported by the speech, language and communication needs specialist centre receive personalised support, which enables them to access mainstream education and continue to their next steps successfully.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged are now making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection, although there is a lag between their rates of progress and those of other pupils with the same starting points nationally. Leaders' strategies are beginning to have more impact on the rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school.
- Inspection evidence, supported by the school's own assessment information, shows that pupils in the lower years are making stronger progress since joining the school, compared with that at key stage 4, where there are still some gaps in knowledge to make up.
- The literacy and numeracy programmes, funded by the Year 7 catch-up additional funding, are very effective in improving pupils' reading and mathematical skills. Most pupils involved with this work last year made good progress in these areas.
- In some year groups and in some subjects, the most able pupils make slower progress than other groups in the school. Work seen in lessons and in books shows that some of the most able pupils are not stretched and challenged enough. The reorganisation of teaching groups, coupled with higher expectations within the curriculum, is helping to improve achievement for the most able pupils in the lower years.

School details

Unique reference number	131601
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10046547

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	840
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Penny Gaunt
Head of School	Rachel Joseph
Telephone number	01273 581 100
Website	www.phcs.org.uk/
Email address	enquiries@pcs.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 March 2016

Information about this school

- Peacehaven Community School is an average-sized, mixed sex school.
- Since November 2015, at the request of the local authority, the Swale Academies Trust has assumed responsibility for improving the school. The trust has provided leadership and training at all levels. The local authority, the trust and the school are working together so that the school can become an academy and part of the trust.
- The local authority delegates responsibility for governance to an interim executive board. This will remain in place until the school converts and opens as an academy within the Swale Academies Trust. This is planned to take place in April 2019.
- The head of school was appointed to post at the start of this academic year. She is supported by an executive headteacher, who is the director of secondary schools for the trust.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan is well above the national average. The school has a special facility for pupils

who have speech and language and communication difficulties. This is attended by 22 pupils.

- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is below national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is in line with the national average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at College Central and Plumpton College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 31 lessons. Most of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised a wide sample of pupils' books.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior and middle leaders, other staff, the chair of the IEB and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also took account of the views of the 45 staff who completed Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school. They also met formally with groups of pupils and considered the views from the 49 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents. They took account of the school's parental survey, the 33 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, and the 30 free-text responses.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information available on the school's website and records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of IEB meetings, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary and the school improvement plan were scrutinised, along with records of the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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