

Penkridge Middle School

Address: Marsh Lane, Penkridge, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST19 5BW

Unique reference number (URN): 144206

Inspection report: 7 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established a highly successful culture of regular attendance and positive behaviour. Leaders' relentless work to support pupils in attending school is highly effective. Pupils' attendance is consistently above national averages and improving, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are disadvantaged. Attendance has a high profile in the school. Staff and families are supportive of leader's actions to improve attendance further. Leaders are acutely aware of pupils and their wider context and the impact this can have on pupils attending school. Detailed analysis of attendance data informs bespoke and supportive interventions. These interventions develop a sense of belonging for pupils and means they want to come to school.

Leaders' high expectations for behaviour are evident throughout the school. The 'PMS Way' is a clear and shared vision for lifelong behaviours that staff consistently implement and pupils enact. Pupils are a delight to speak to. They are polite and welcoming to visitors and speak positively about school. In lessons, pupils show respect, listen carefully and avoid disruptions. They manage their own behaviour and apply themselves diligently to their learning. At social times, pupils interact positively and well with one another. Bullying is rare. If it does occur, it is dealt with quickly by staff. The very few pupils who do not meet leaders' expectations receive interventions that allow them to self-regulate and reflect on their behaviour.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have created a personal development and wellbeing programme that is detailed, well planned and progressive. Leaders ensure that pupils' preparedness for life in modern Britain is as equally important as their academic experiences. Regular communication and the deliberate timing of personal, social, health and economic lessons supports pupils in demonstrating the impact. The programme is regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects the context of the school, the local area and is flexible to react to arising issues.

Pupils are articulate advocates of the personal development programme. They discuss topics relating to protected characteristics, fundamental British values, democracy, online safety, finance and relationship and sex education with confidence. Pupils know about diverse cultures and faiths from around the world. The impact of the personal development programme is clear in the way pupils interact with each other and the powerful sense of community that the school has.

All pupils benefit from a wealth of opportunities and experiences, including clubs and visits. Pupils' talents and interests are nurtured through clubs, such as crochet, karate and dance. Pupils experience trips that range from the local fire station through to trips abroad. These opportunities are designed to support pupils' academic and emotional development. Participation in these opportunities is tracked to ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, fully benefit. Pupils relish the leadership opportunities that are available to them and pupil voice has a real impact on the school community.

Pupils benefit from a supportive and effective pastoral team that pupils are confident to speak to about any worries or concerns. Pupils are well supported with any wellbeing concerns, for example the transition to high school. Pupils' preparation for their future education, employment and training is well considered and implemented. For example, local partnerships with employers gives pupils a real-life experience of the world of work.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders use a variety of in-school and external assessment to track the progress and outcomes for pupils. This allows specific and tailored interventions to be monitored and tracked with clear impact on outcomes. Pupils are confident and fluent readers. Pupils generally build their knowledge and skills successfully across the curriculum. Work in books is typically of a high quality and highlights that pupils make progress through the curriculum. While most pupils can articulate their learning, there are examples of books, where key vocabulary is misspelt or misunderstood.

Although achievement in national tests is in line with national averages, leaders are aware that writing is a priority. This is being addressed through professional development and extended writing across subjects. In the best lessons, this is taught and modelled in a detailed fashion, with a clear, positive impact on pupil outcomes. Pupils who are disadvantaged do not achieve as well as they have historically. Nevertheless, leaders understand the barriers these pupils face and are working effectively to close gaps.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a varied and balanced curriculum that enables pupils to build their knowledge and skills over time. Leaders have liaised with first and high schools to ensure that their curriculum is sequenced coherently on from what pupils know, to what pupils will need to know for their next steps. Leaders have a clear understanding of the curriculum and assure themselves that it meets their high expectations.

Teachers have clear subject knowledge and employ a range of teaching strategies. They select activities that match pupils' needs, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who are disadvantaged. Teachers typically deliver the intended learning well. When this happens, teachers use directed questioning and strategies that support pupils in revisiting previous learning. These lessons allow pupils to respond and learning is deepened. However, in some lessons, adaptations are not effective in securing knowledge before pupils move on and gaps in knowledge are evident. Assessment is generally used well. Where most effective, assessment is used to identify, reinforce and secure pupils' understanding of key concepts and knowledge but this is not consistently embedded across lessons.

Leaders have made astute decisions about pupils, who are at risk of falling behind. They have strengthened the provision for pupils' numeracy and reading to ensure that they

receive timely and effective support. Leaders are implementing focused support to embed writing, handwriting and spelling across the curriculum.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious and aspire to ensure equitable access to school for all pupils. Leaders know pupils with barriers to learning and wellbeing well. Effective links and relationships with first schools means that pupils' needs are identified quickly and accurately through robust processes. This identification and support for vulnerable pupils continues throughout their time at the school. Leaders are outward looking and have secure partnerships with external agencies that benefit pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those pupils who are disadvantaged.

Staff receive specific training regarding pupils with SEND and regular updates to ensure that their needs are met. Pupil passports provide staff with additional strategies that support learning as well as remove barriers to wellbeing. These include deliberate groupings, scaffolded questions, adapted written resources and emotional support. Continuous review and the involvement of pupils and families means that pupils' needs are typically well met. Staff working with pupils who have additional needs know them. They work well with specialist equipment and interventions to support pupils' participation.

The use of funding to support those pupils who are disadvantaged or known to social care is well thought out. There is an adaptive and equitable approach for these pupils that is complemented by clear communication with professionals and the virtual school.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know their school well and are aspirational for the pupils. They are instrumental in bringing the school ethos of 'a school community that is happy, healthy and safe' to life. Leaders use a range of assurances to ensure that they know what the school's strengths and priorities for development are. Leaders are reflective and proactive in seeking ideas and making decisions in the best interests of pupils. They are realistic in implementing actions that bring about sustainable change. The culture of safeguarding, the comprehensive personal development programme and highly positive attendance and behaviour highlight the impact of leaders' actions. Leaders are focused upon embedding best practice across the school to support consistent teaching and outcomes.

Governors and trustees have a shared vision for the school and know the school well. They have the experience and depth of knowledge to ensure that they support and challenge leaders robustly. Governors and trustees ensure that funding and resources are used in the best interests of pupils and meet their statutory requirements. They also have a secure understanding of leaders' capacity to drive forward improvements in the school's provision.

Leaders use professional development to support staff and promote the sharing of best practice. Staff receive effective guidance on supporting all pupils with barriers to learning. Leaders collaborate successfully with other schools to share expertise and improve practice. Staff highlight that leaders are trusted and supportive. Leaders are purposeful; they consider staff workload and wellbeing when making decisions. Staff feel listened to and valued as a

result. Leaders and staff are enthusiastic about the learning and wellbeing of the pupils in their care.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to part of the Penkridge Middle School team. The school's values of effort, encouragement and excellence permeate the day-to-day experience of pupils. As pupils enter the school, they enact the goals of the school community in the way they behave, the way they learn and the way they are. Pupils are safe and happy at the school.

Pupils enjoy coming to the school because of the experiences they have when they attend. Pupils are kind and respectful to one another and to staff. Pupils are open and friendly towards adults. Pupils have positive relationships with staff, and a strength of the school is how well pupils are known by staff. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or pupils who are disadvantaged, know there is an adult they can talk to. No pupil is invisible in the school.

The school is calm and pupils are well behaved. Lessons are rarely interrupted and teachers can teach. Social times are harmonious. Pupils are taught the importance of 'getting along' and know that if their behaviour falls short of staff expectations, it is dealt with effectively. Bullying is rare and staff take swift action to address it.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum that enables them to build knowledge over time. Pupils typically experience effective teaching. Pupils' achievement in national tests is in line with their peers.

The personal development programme prepares pupils well for their next steps. Pupils experience a multitude of opportunities that develops their character and nurtures their interests. The school's trim trail highlights that pupils have a voice in the school. Pupils are rewarded for their achievements across the school and for their impact on the local community. Pupils thrive because they are part of the school 'team'.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently adapt teaching strategies to inform subsequent teaching.
 - Leaders should ensure that all teachers use assessments to promptly and accurately address errors and misconceptions so that pupils make better progress in lessons.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers utilise specific training to help pupils build on their prior learning more successfully.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Penk Valley Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Trevor Sutcliffe, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Roberts.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, leaders from the school and from the trust, governors, members of teaching and non-teaching staff and several groups of pupils during the inspection. An inspector spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use alternative provision.

The headteacher commenced their post in June 2022.

Headteacher: Andrew Grocutt

Lead inspector:

Andrew Washbourne, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, Ofsted Inspector

Elaine Haskins, Ofsted Inspector

Mark Grady, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.



The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

500

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

500

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

17.40%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.60%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

17.20%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	57%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	59%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	56%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	77%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	74%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	66%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	64%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	68%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	66%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	76%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	73%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	38%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	23%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	41%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	57%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	68%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	85%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	42%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	23%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	61%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	38%	68%	-30 pp
2024/25 (final)	23%	69%	-46 pp
2023/24 (final)	41%	67%	-27 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	69%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	68%	80%	-12 pp
2022/23 (final)	85%	78%	7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	42%	78%	-36 pp
2024/25 (final)	23%	78%	-56 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2022/23 (final)	55%	77%	-22 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	71%	80%	-9 pp
2024/25 (final)	61%	81%	-20 pp
2023/24 (final)	77%	79%	-2 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	79%	-4 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	3.5%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.4%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.2%	9.0%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.0%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.6%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	9.3%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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