

Pioneer House High School

200 Yewtree Lane, Northern Moor, Manchester M23 0FF

Inspection dates

8 to 9 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- This school's success is the fruition of years of meticulous planning and preparation. Leaders have been relentless in their pursuit of excellence. Consequently, the first cohort of pupils to leave the school has secured qualifications and paid employment.
- Leaders, trustees and governors have an accurate view of the school's performance. They use a wealth of reliable information, both qualitative and quantitative, to identify priorities and evaluate the impact of their actions. This has ensured sustained and substantial improvements to the provision since the school opened.
- This is a school where no one rests on their laurels. When pupils started to exceed the targets set for them, leaders set considerably more challenging targets. Teachers and pupils rose to this challenge so that current pupils, particularly the most able, make exceptional progress from their starting points. Lower-ability pupils do comparatively less well.
- Pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and around school, is calm and orderly. Pupils quickly learn to better regulate their own behaviour so that incidents reduce in frequency and severity. Pupils are sensitive to each other's needs and offer unsolicited support and guidance to each other.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils understand and carry out their responsibilities as young citizens of Manchester.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for. Pupils are highly knowledgeable about the potential risks to them, both at school and in their community, and how best to manage these.
- Not a moment is wasted in the classroom. Teachers plan lessons meticulously so that they engage and enthuse pupils, build on previous learning and provide suitable challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Leaders refine and improve the school's curriculum offer continually. They make sure that teachers have the support, training and resources to plan and deliver lessons in the different subjects.
- Leaders' investment in their staff is paying dividends. Leaders are adept at talent spotting, committed to helping staff develop their careers and confident to let staff take risks and try things out for themselves. This approach has helped them establish a successful team.
- Pupils are happy to come to school. Almost all pupils attend school on time every day. A small number of pupils have joined the school more recently with a history of poor attendance. All these pupils have improved their attendance as a result of the school's support and challenge.
- The school's 16 to 19 provision has gone from strength to strength. Pupils are well prepared to run their homes, manage their finances and hold down a job when they leave the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise expectations for lower-ability pupils so that they too consistently achieve the school's ambitious aspirations for all pupils, including the skills and confidence to live independently and get a job.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders are meticulous in their attention to detail. From their initial idea to the school today, leaders' determined pursuit of excellence has influenced every aspect of the school: staff recruitment, training, support and curriculum design. Consequently, pupils are achieving above and beyond their own expectations as well as those of staff, parents and carers.
- Leaders' ambitious vision for every pupil to move into employment is becoming a reality. Some of the first pupils to leave the school at the end of key stage 5 have secured paid employment. Moreover, there are current pupils who already have paid and voluntary jobs.
- Leaders continually monitor and evaluate pupils' progress across the school. They make good use of this information to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. When leaders identified that almost all pupils were making better than the school's expected progress, leaders raised expectations considerably, particularly for the most able pupils. Consequently, all key stage 4 pupils are now on track to gain academic qualifications.
- Leaders are continually refining and improving the school's curriculum offer. They make effective use of the wealth of information available to them. They pinpoint the specific reasons for any differences in pupils' performance across the various subjects. For example, they have made music more relevant to pupils by including learning about the music particular to their city, Manchester. Consequently, pupils achieve consistently well in all subjects.
- Leaders' investment in their staff is paying dividends. Frequent professional dialogue promotes collaboration, communication and challenge. Leaders provide teaching staff with honest feedback following lesson observations, which staff find invaluable in helping them to improve their practice. Moreover, high-quality training and support ensure that all teaching staff make a significant impact on improving pupils' performance across the curriculum.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are continually identifying opportunities to further improve the school's performance but make sure that they do not lose their focus on the most pressing issues.
- Leaders make sure that pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up monies are used highly effectively to support eligible pupils. Leaders make good use of performance data for these groups of pupils to prioritise spending. Frequent reviews ensure that spending makes the positive difference for pupils that leaders anticipated. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress across the curriculum in line with their peers. Moreover, Year 7 pupils get off to a flying start at the school. Teachers put in place support to ensure that they secure essential numeracy and literacy skills.
- Leaders know the school's local community well. They make sure the curriculum prepares pupils well to live and work in Manchester. They ensure that pupils are sensitive to tensions in the community, for example following the Manchester arena bombing. Moreover, they encourage pupils to be active citizens by taking part in

community events, volunteering and raising money for local charities.

- Pioneer House High is a warm, welcoming school where visitors, staff, pupils and families are treated with respect, regardless of religion, sexuality or ethnicity. Pupils know right from wrong and the possible legal and personal consequences of any inappropriate behaviours.

Governance of the school

- Trustees and governors share leaders' ambitious vision for the school, its staff and pupils. They are equally determined that the school transforms the life chances of its pupils. The trust has worked in partnership with the local authority to ensure that their plans for the school help to meet identified local area needs.
- Trustees and governors have played a key role in the school's success. They put in place meticulous plans to transform the trust's vision for the school into reality. The multi-academy trust prioritised its staff, training and resources to make sure that the school got off to a flying start. The local governing body has ensured that it has members with suitable skills, experience and expertise to support and challenge leaders at every stage of the school's development.
- Governors use a wealth of information, including external reviews, pupil performance information and focused school visits to keep well informed. Governors up-to-date, in-depth knowledge of the school's performance enables them to provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. Governors' frequent checks on pupils' achievement help them to identify any emerging issues and ensure these are resolved swiftly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils, staff and parents strongly agree that pupils are well cared for and safe. The school's curriculum provides pupils with a wealth of opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe, both in school and in their community. Pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about the increasing prevalence of knife crime and gang culture in Manchester. Pupils are aware of their own particular vulnerability to exploitation due to their special educational needs. Pupils are taught how to respond when things go wrong, such as missing a bus or receiving an inappropriate message on social media.
- Leaders make sure that staff are up-to-date with their training. Staff are highly vigilant. All concerns are meticulously recorded and followed up assiduously. Staff liaise well with external partners to support the school's most vulnerable pupils, including children looked after. Excellent staff-pupil relationships mean that pupils feel confident to share any worries they may have with an adult in school.
- Pupils are adamant that staff would deal swiftly and effectively with any potential bullying incidents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils listen attentively to their teachers, pay heed to advice given and take pride in their work. Teachers and teaching assistants work together seamlessly. High-quality training and support have ensured that all staff are leaders of learning in the classroom.
- Staff have excellent subject knowledge so they provide clear explanations, ask probing questions and pick up quickly on misconceptions. Staff adapt activities so that every pupil can access learning. For example, teaching assistants prepare a range of resources suitable for the different needs of pupils to support learning in mathematics lessons.
- There is a 'golden thread' that links the objectives in pupils' education, health and care plans with medium term plans and then individual lesson plans. Teachers ensure that they plan opportunities in every lesson for pupils to work towards their personal targets. Consequently, pupils are helped to overcome their individual barriers to learning successfully.
- Teachers routinely assess pupils' learning throughout each lesson, including through talking to pupils and teaching assistants. They routinely check pupils' work and use this information well to move learning on, challenge misconceptions and deepen understanding. Furthermore, teachers use this information to plan subsequent lessons as well as put in place any additional support required. This ensures that lessons are appropriately pitched for all the pupils in the class.
- Pupils take pride in their work, which they set out neatly. They pay heed to their teachers' feedback. They routinely edit their work, correcting errors and making improvements. This advice and guidance help pupils make strong progress across the curriculum, as they continually improve their skills and knowledge.
- Teachers plan every lesson with the school's core purpose at the heart. Each lesson helps prepare pupils for adulthood. For example, mathematics lessons are firmly rooted in everyday situations to build pupils' confidence and competence with money, time and number.
- Parents are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. Frequent phone calls, regular written reports and review meetings make sure parents are involved in their children's education. The overwhelming majority of parents are delighted with their children's progress in all aspects of their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in the wealth of extra-curricular activities. They make good use of their breaktimes, for example singing or playing board games or computing.

- A significant proportion of the pupils travel to school independently. The school's successful travel-training programme helps pupils to become competent and confident users of a range of public transport across the city, including trams and buses.
- Pupils are confident and self-assured learners. They are willing to have a go at the tasks set by their teachers. They understand that learning from mistakes is a key part of success. They are resilient, persevering when they find lessons tricky and proud when they master difficult skills.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves healthy. They understand the risks of drugs and alcohol as well as the importance of regular exercise and good personal hygiene. Younger pupils learn about healthy relationships and older pupils about sexual health.
- The school's curriculum places great emphasis on pupils' development as 'young Mancunians'. Pupils are highly knowledgeable about their city, including its musical heritage and diverse communities. Older pupils recognise the importance of learning to speak different languages in order to communicate well with different people within their community.
- Staff plan a wealth of opportunities to help pupils deal with everyday situations they will find themselves in as adults. For example, pupils are challenged to find unfamiliar landmarks across the city, vote in an election and plan a celebration.
- Pupils keep up-to-date with current affairs. They are able to talk about local, national and international events. They develop as confident and articulate citizens who are able to talk about topics such as the right to vote and are comfortable to chat to shopkeepers, bus drivers and their work colleagues.
- Every pupil receives comprehensive careers advice and guidance. The school goes the 'extra mile' to help pupils find out about the different careers available. Pupils meet employers, visit colleges and attend careers fairs to help them make informed choices. High-quality work placements help pupils identify their preferred type of work place and job. Pupils have tried their hands at hospitality, facilities management and retail.
- Pupils relish the opportunities afforded by frequent trips and visits to local places of interest. Older pupils talked enthusiastically about residential trips. For some pupils, this was the first time they had stayed away from their families overnight. Pupils across the school enjoy taking part in local competitions, such as inter-school sports tournaments.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour both in lessons and around school is praiseworthy. Since the school opened, the frequency and severity of behaviour incidents has reduced dramatically. Teachers plan lessons carefully, taking into account the behavioural needs of pupils. There are planned movement breaks between lessons, seating plans and visual timetables to help pupils cope with the demands of the school day.
- There are occasional incidents of name-calling, but pupils explained that this is usually younger pupils who are less adept at regulating their behaviour. All pupils confirmed that any name-calling is in the heat of the moment and issues are resolved swiftly and

peaceably. Pupils understand the hurtful impact of this behaviour on their schoolmates. Consequently, incidents are increasingly rare as pupils move up through the school.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the excellent attendance records of the vast majority of pupils. A number of pupils have medical needs which impact negatively on their attendance. The school works closely with families and other agencies to reduce the impact of these appointments. A small minority of pupils have joined the school recently with a history of poor attendance. These pupils have significantly improved their rates of attendance and punctuality. The school works well with any parents who struggle to get their children to school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils across the school have exceeded their own expectations and aspirations as well as those of staff and parents. In the school's first two years, pupils routinely achieved and exceeded the school's benchmarks for outstanding progress. Leaders set substantially higher expectations, which the overwhelming majority of pupils are now meeting. Consequently, pupils are making substantial and sustained progress across the school.
- Leaders effectively identified the reasons for any historical underperformance in subjects across the curriculum. They put targeted actions in place which have ensured that pupils now make consistently strong progress in all subjects. Consequently, current pupils are achieving well in mathematics, writing and music as well as other subjects.
- Current pupils are making strong progress in mathematics. Previous weaknesses in pupils' skills in using and applying their mathematical knowledge have been resolved. Teachers plan a range of opportunities for pupils to develop these skills, not only in mathematics lessons but across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils develop a deep, long-term and adaptable understanding of mathematics. For example, older pupils were able to estimate interest charges on monies borrowed in their personal finance lesson, while younger pupils were able to solve tricky, multi-step mathematical word problems.
- Pupils are confident and fluent readers. They are given age-appropriate texts adapted to their individual abilities. Frequent opportunities to practise reading and talk about the text help them to grow in confidence and fluency. Pupils are able to use their literacy skills in everyday life as well as indulge their love of reading for pleasure.
- Pupils are given the appropriate support and help over time to develop as independent writers. They are encouraged to edit and review their work so that they continually improve the quality and accuracy of their writing. As a result, pupils are able to write confidently and accurately at length for a range of purposes.
- The school's well-planned curriculum, careful timetabling and effective subject teaching mean that pupils achieve well in the broad range of subjects taught. For example, pupils learn three different modern foreign languages across the school. Pupils learn essential vocabulary, which helps them construct simple phrases and sentences. Pupils are able to talk about the similarities and differences between these modern foreign languages and English.
- Leaders and teachers have significantly raised their expectations for all pupils. In

particular, they have taken into account the potential of their most-able pupils. They make sure that these pupils make considerable progress from their starting points as a result of more challenging curricular goals. While middle-ability pupils are benefiting from these raised expectations, some lower-ability pupils are not quite meeting leaders' ambitious targets.

- Current pupils in Year 11 are all on track to achieve entry-level qualifications in English and mathematics so that they can work towards higher-level qualifications in key stage 5.
- All pupils move on to post-16 education at the end of Year 11. All these pupils successfully stay in education in key stage 5.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The deputy headteacher provides strong, effective leadership for the 16 to 19 provision. Her ambitious vision for the students is shared by the teaching team that works with her. This team's relentless focus on preparing students for adulthood has helped them to secure employment, travel independently and learn to run a home.
- Teachers make sure that not a moment is wasted for their students. Their meticulous planning follows well-considered schemes of work which set out the essential knowledge students need to acquire. Age-appropriate tasks are pitched at the right level for all students' aptitudes and abilities. As a result, these highly engaged and enthusiastic young people make strong progress.
- Excellent relationships are the bedrock of this provision. Students talk positively of the lasting friendships they have formed with their peers. Staff and students create a safe, supportive environment in which students are confident to share and debate their opinions.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well through age-appropriate activities which motivate these students. For example, in a literacy lesson, students were focused on composing and responding to a text message. They talked about the appropriateness of formal and informal language, dependent on the nature of the message. They discussed the use of symbols and checked their spelling and punctuation carefully.
- The school's 16 to 19 curriculum is exceptionally well designed to ensure that students are as well prepared as possible for employment and independent living. Students learn how to carry out household chores, manage finances and travel independently. They also learn how to behave appropriately in the workplace, and to consider the types of jobs which would best suit their interests and aptitudes.
- Staff engage well with employers, colleges and other agencies to give students the best possible chance of success. Students all participate in purposeful work experience placements. Most students access these placements independently.
- Last year all students moved successfully into supported internships or college courses. Those young people in the supported internships have secured paid employment.
- This year more students are making plans to move on to supported internships, while others are applying for places at college. The school's high-quality careers programme provides all students with personalised advice and support to prepare for and make the transition from school to college or work.

- Students get on well together. They value the friendships they have made at school. They are proud of the progress they have all made over time to help them overcome some of their difficulties, such as self-regulating their behaviour. They are insightful about the triggers for any conflict in the group but agree that this is resolved swiftly and effectively.
- Students are happy to come to school. They enjoy their lessons and get on well with their teachers. This is reflected in their excellent attendance records.
- Staff ensure that students know the potential safeguarding risks they face, both now and when they move into adulthood. They are aware of the risks of drugs and alcohol and are well-equipped to deal with any issues that may arise. Students and staff agree that students in this provision are safeguarded effectively.
- Students are proud of their school. They take their responsibilities as role models for younger pupils seriously and are excellent ambassadors for the school. They know how to look after themselves and understand the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise.
- All these students are working towards suitable accreditation and qualifications which provide them with essential skills and knowledge to make a valuable contribution both in the workplace and their local community.

School details

Unique reference number	142893
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10087792

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	18
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jenny Collinson
Headteacher	Wendy Godfrey
Telephone number	0161 241 8100
Website	pioneerhousehighschool.net
Email address	admin@pioneerhouse.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Pioneer House High School opened as an academy free school in September 2016. This school was set up to develop 'confident, independent young people who enjoy life and make a positive contribution to their community'. It is one of the six schools that form a multi-academy trust. The chief executive officer of Prospere Learning Trust oversees the six schools. The school is governed by a local governing body which reports to the board of trustees.
- Pioneer House High School moved to a purpose-built new building two years ago. It has a range of facilities, including a one-bedroom bungalow, polytunnel, wooded area and play areas.

- The school caters for pupils with SEND. All the pupils have education, health and care plans. All the pupils have significant learning difficulties. Some pupils also have autistic spectrum conditions, while others are hearing impaired.
- The majority of pupils join the school from mainstream schools at Years 7 and 12, although the first three intakes have seen pupils joining in all year groups. In the first two years after the school opened, a significant number of pupils joined the school from Piper Hill School, a specialist support school within the multi-academy trust. Most recently, pupils have joined from a range of other providers, including special schools, pupil referral units and alternative provision.
- Currently, most pupils who attend the school are placed by Manchester local authority.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average. A very small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The majority of pupils are boys.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. They checked work in a range of pupils' books as well as online.
- The inspectors held meetings with leaders, governors, trustees, teachers and other adults working in the school. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with an officer of the local authority, who has placed children in the school, a virtual school headteacher and a representative of the local college.
- An inspector spoke with the local authority school improvement officer who quality assures the work of the school.
- The inspectors scrutinised an extensive range of school documentation, including policies, planning, documents relating to the leadership and management of the school and information about the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils. They scrutinised the school's records and systems to check the suitability of adults to work in the school.
- The inspectors spoke formally with pupils, as well as informally during the school day, and observed them during breaktimes.
- There was one response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. The inspectors reviewed the results of the school's most recent parent survey, which was completed by 18 parents.
- The inspectors considered the 22 written responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cole Andrew

Ofsted 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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