

Notre Dame Plymouth

Looseleigh Lane, Derriford, Plymouth, Devon PL6 5HN

Inspection dates

25–26 January 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders of the academy trust, governors and school leaders have not made enough improvements to secure good outcomes for pupils.
- Governors have not provided effective challenge to school leaders to ensure that improvement plans are fit for purpose.
- The leadership of teaching has not led to improvements in pupils' achievement. Subject leaders are not held to account rigorously, particularly when standards fall.
- Some teachers' expectations of pupils are too low and they do not plan effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- Weaker teachers are not supported and trained well enough to improve their practice.
- Pupils start in the school with abilities that are in line with other pupils nationally. They do not make the progress required to succeed in a range of subjects.
- Attendance of pupils remains low despite recent improvements.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. Some pupils show a lack of pride in their work and no enthusiasm for learning.
- Academic standards in the sixth form are too low, particularly for disadvantaged students.

The school has the following strengths

- The welfare of the pupils is a strong feature of the school. Pupils feel safe and are safe.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of the curriculum are taught well. Pupils understand and respect the fundamental British values of law, tolerance and democracy.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points.
- The sixth form students are proud to mentor and support the younger pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - plans for improvement are sharply focused on key priorities, actions for improvement and evaluation of their impact
 - governors provide a greater degree of challenge to school leaders
 - middle leaders are held to greater account for the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make
 - the leadership and monitoring of teaching identifies and challenges underperformance and is linked closely to the progress pupils make
 - close monitoring and appropriate action enables underachieving disadvantaged students in the sixth form to catch up with their peers.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - the training teachers receive is targeted carefully so that it has the most impact on pupils' progress
 - teachers have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning
 - teachers plan more effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- Improve behaviour by ensuring that action continues to be taken to increase attendance, particularly for those pupils who are persistently absent.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The academy trust has not acted quickly enough to ensure that the quality of leadership and governance of the school leads to good outcomes for pupils.
- School leaders have not been able to bring about the level of improvement necessary. The evaluation of teaching has been overgenerous. The link between teaching quality and pupils' outcomes has not been explicit enough, so pupils have not made as much progress as they should.
- The systems for managing the performance of teachers are not robust enough. Targets are linked to teachers' personal goals but do not focus precisely enough on developing the quality of teaching and raising pupils' outcomes.
- Subject leaders have not brought about enough improvement in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills because their work is not monitored effectively. Subject leaders are not sufficiently held to account when teaching is poor. As a result, pupils are not making rapid progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have evaluated the needs of pupils with regard to the curriculum and the choices it offers, especially in key stages 4 and 5.
- The range of extra-curricular activities supports pupils to live a healthy lifestyle adequately. The choices vary between sports, activities that develop spirituality and a range of other clubs. Over half the school population attends at least one club. Disadvantaged pupils attend in similar proportions.
- The careers education and guidance programme that begins in Year 7 and continues through to Year 13 is comprehensive. It provides effective instruction that prepares pupils well for their next steps. All pupils, in 2016, moved on to sustained education, employment or training.
- The school undertook a review of the use of pupil premium funding in the autumn term of 2016. It is too soon to comment on the impact of the implemented recommendations. While the most able disadvantaged pupils are achieving as well as others nationally, lower-ability pupils and those who are absent more often do not achieve well.
- The special educational needs coordinator's leadership is very good. Processes are secure and up to date. The funding is spent well on the training of teaching assistants, for example, resulting in a positive impact on pupils' current progress.
- The funding for Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up is used successfully. Pupils are able to cope with the demands of the key stage 3 learning in a relatively short space of time.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum is at the heart of the school's ethos. Messages and instruction come through carefully-planned teaching of personal, social, health and economic education as well as religious education. As a result, pupils develop self-confidence and self-respect as they move up through the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors are not involved strategically in the planning for improvements. They ask questions of the leadership team but these are not sufficiently challenging and have failed to have an impact on improving standards. Governors are supportive of the school and keen to do well. For this reason, it is recommended that a review take place to help them understand their role and its demands so that they can become more efficient.
- Governors are insufficiently exacting in target-setting for staff and pay awards. The system is not used to challenge and develop good or better teaching.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leadership of safeguarding is of a very high standard. School leaders have created a culture where assessing risk and taking action to prevent it is the norm. The personal safety and well-being of pupils are secure. The checks undertaken on staff and visitors, and for recruitment purposes, are stringent. Secure processes are in place for monitoring and recording any safeguarding concerns. Staff are trained in how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Staff work sensitively with parents and external agencies to monitor and support the many vulnerable pupils within the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies across the school. Evaluation of its impact on learning is not robust. Some practices and policies are not followed consistently by all staff, so pupils' experiences are mixed. This variability in practice shows in their work, which is often untidy and incomplete.
- Leaders at senior and subject level do not have high enough expectations of pupils. Consequently, the standard of pupils' work is not high enough in some subjects.
- Teachers do not plan activities that meet the full range of pupils' needs. As a result, achievement is too often below an acceptable standard.
- The teaching of English is a strength. However, literacy skills are not promoted in the wider curriculum and no attempt is made to check or improve pupils' writing in these subjects.
- The teaching of mathematics has been reviewed following the poor results in 2016. Some actions to improve teaching and learning in the subject are having a positive impact on the attainment of the most able. However, other pupils spoke of finding mathematics too easy and not feeling stretched in their problem-solving and reasoning.
- The assessment of pupils' learning is undertaken systematically. Extra support is put in place where required as a result, but this does not always help pupils to make the progress they are capable of.
- Where teaching is engaging and has been planned thoughtfully, pupils are responsive and doing well because teaching activities deepen their thinking. Inspectors observed

this in practical subjects such as information technology and music.

- Pupils' reading is fluent. It is tracked and monitored within the English department and pupils read a wide variety of texts in different genres. Reading is not developed as well in other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The majority of the school community has a positive attitude about caring for one another. Sixth-form students concern themselves with the welfare of the younger pupils and a 'buddy' system allows issues to be resolved with a minimum of fuss.
- The emotional welfare of the pupils is a high priority within the school. Pupils are respectful towards each other and also share good relationships with staff.
- Pupils are tolerant of each other and understand that diversity and differences are interesting. They are encouraged to learn about other faiths and they show a mature response.
- Pupils are taught skilfully about personal and internet safety, as well as staying safe when faced with different potential hazards such as water, fire and roads.
- The nurturing of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective. There are effective transition arrangements that allow pupils to come into school more often at the end of Year 6 so that routines can be established prior to the September start. As a result, pupils have a greater understanding of the layout of the school and the personnel with whom they will be working. This makes for a seamless change and learning can begin immediately.
- Prospective Year 6 pupils are provided with an internet chat room during the summer holidays where they can communicate any worries and questions. Staff respond to these on a regular basis and pupils are more confident on arrival as a result.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils do not show an intellectual curiosity or pride in their work, so improvement is slow. They are disengaged sometimes and lack enthusiasm for what is being taught.
- Pupils are not provided with enough activities that develop a more enquiring mind and therefore their learning does not progress as rapidly as it could.
- School leaders overhauled the systems for managing behaviour in 2016 and there have been improvements in pupil conduct. There is very little low-level disruption in learning.
- Attendance has been too low and persistent absence too high in past years. Leaders did not take action quickly enough to resolve this. However, since September 2016, staff have taken more decisive and determined action to engage with parents and pupils to correct this situation. As a result, attendance is improving but it is not good enough yet.

- Disadvantaged pupils have been given a transport allowance and this has increased their attendance at school with most attending every day.
- There are a few pupils who attend alternative provision for health reasons and their attendance is good at these establishments. They are looked after well by staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress of pupils from their different starting points shows a mixed picture because the systems for analysing the information about pupils' achievement are not used in a consistent way by all subject leaders. It is also because the information is not evaluated effectively enough. Despite some teachers entering assessment data that shows no improvement over time, subject leaders have failed to react to this and make the necessary enquiries and adjustments.
- The link between good teaching, positive attitudes to learning and successful outcomes has not been made by some leaders and subject leaders. Pupils' progress is, consequently, slow or difficult to assess. This has a greater impact on lower-ability pupils when activities are not planned skilfully with precise intervention and support.
- The majority of pupils in each year group are in the middle ability range. Teachers' expectations are not high enough for them and this has had a negative impact on their outcomes, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Although pupils move on to sustained education, employment or training, some pupils who underachieve are not able to access the wider range of options that reflect their true potential. This is because leaders and teachers have not ensured that pupils make strong progress to achieve the standards they are capable of.
- The progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils is improving and they are achieving in line with others nationally. Absence continues to have a negative impact on some disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. Progress is slow for them despite the school introducing ways to catch up, such as emailing work home and lunch clubs. This reflects the inconsistent monitoring that has taken place at subject level.
- Achievement in English and humanities is strong regardless of the starting points of pupils. The good teaching and consistent use of assessment informs teachers' practice so that they can support pupils to move forward with their learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities currently on roll are showing good progress from their different starting points. The high level of need of these pupils is understood and supported well by skilful teaching assistants.
- The few pupils who attend alternative provision for health reasons are making adequate progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- School performance information, based on regular assessment, shows that Year 13 students are not achieving well. They are not on track to achieve their targets because they are not making the rapid progress required.

- The number of disadvantaged students in the sixth form is comparatively low. Some of these pupils are not adequately supported in the subjects they choose to study. The progress of disadvantaged students, in most cases, is therefore slower than that of other students.
- Teaching does not sufficiently help or challenge students towards substantial and sustained progress, although teachers are committed and have good subject knowledge.
- The provision and teaching for retaking English and mathematics has not been good and results have been weak. The new head of sixth form is aware of this and is beginning to make appropriate changes to the teaching.
- The head of sixth form recognises the changes that need to take place throughout the sixth form and has implemented many of them already. It is too soon to see the impact of these measures.
- The school works collaboratively with four other schools in the city to broaden the curriculum offered and provide other opportunities to students. This arrangement is helping to ensure that students are better prepared for life in modern Britain and providing them with the best options for future careers.
- The more rigorous entry demands for current Year 12 students are showing better outcomes. This indicates that students are following courses that better suit their aptitude for learning and satisfy their career expectations.
- Pupils achieve well in vocational subjects and have done so over time. Pupils have not achieved as well in academic subjects because entry requirements have not ensured that all students are well suited to these courses.
- Students on vocational courses have a work placement for one day a week which complements their studies and provides effective practical experience for them in a professional setting.
- As in the rest of the school, the personal development and welfare of the students are good. Senior students are elected to lead on study habits, spirituality and social support within the sixth form. The post is held from February onwards for 12 months and it is regarded as a prestigious accomplishment. Students gain valuable leadership experience, dependent on their personal attributes, which prepares them better for life after school.
- The strength of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum enhances the well-being of the students who understand the fundamental British values of democracy and equality.
- Sixth-form students enjoy being part of the whole-school community. They seek out ways to inspire younger pupils and value the many opportunities that this provides, whether in sport, faith, charitable work, entertainment or study.
- Attendance in the sixth form is good because there are secure procedures in place throughout the partnership of schools to monitor it and intervene where necessary.
- The retention rate for students is high. Students are guided well and want to stay on and succeed.

School details

Unique reference number	140737
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10024947

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	735
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	178
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Graham Johnson
Headteacher	Kate White
Telephone number	01752 775101
Website	www.ndonline.org
Email address	info@ndonline.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Notre Dame Plymouth is smaller than the average-sized secondary school and is part of Plymouth CAST. The Trust was formed in April 2014. The work of the Trust is overseen by a board of directors. The Trust is responsible for one nursery, one first school, 32 primary schools and two secondary schools across seven local authorities in the South West region.
- The school joined the Trust and became an academy on 1 April 2014. When its predecessor school, Notre Dame RC School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about contacts for enquiries, destinations of students older than 18, the spending of Year 7 catch-up funding to support literacy and numeracy, the review of the special educational needs report, the protected characteristics within the equalities and diversity policy and an annual report on governance on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities with an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards that sets the minimum expectation for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons, many jointly with senior leaders.
- A wide sample of pupils' work, from all year groups and a range of subjects, was scrutinised.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5, as well as with pupils informally across the site.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body and the area adviser for the trust.
- Information and other documentary evidence were evaluated including that relating to safeguarding, assessment, school evaluation and external reviews.
- Inspectors took account of 154 responses to and 35 comments in the online Parent View survey, the parental survey undertaken by the school; 35 responses to the pupil online survey; and 58 responses to the staff online survey.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marie Hunter	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Lovett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Laver	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017