

Inspection of Portland Academy

Weymouth Road, Chapelgarth, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR3 2NQ

Inspection dates: 25–27 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are enthusiastic about the different activities they do. They enjoy learning. They say that staff help them when needed. Staff celebrate when pupils have learned something new. Pupils understand the importance of being able to read well. They know it helps them undertake daily tasks with confidence.

Pupils are ambitious about their future. They look forward to the chance to participate in work experience from Year 10 and into the sixth form. Pupils receive high-quality careers advice. Pupils say that work experience gives them the skills they need to get a job when they are an adult. Some pupils relish the opportunities to help younger pupils.

Bullying is rare, and staff take swift action to resolve situations when they arise. Pupils understand the difference between bullying and falling out. They know that staff will help them to rebuild friendships.

Parents are complimentary about the school. Parents say that their children are happy to be at school, they are well cared for and they feel safe. One parent said, 'My child has blossomed in the school's care.'

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that interests and engages pupils. The curriculum focuses on helping pupils to develop the skills they need to communicate well with others. Teachers plan lessons to meet the needs of each pupil. Teachers ensure that pupils have individual targets for what they need to learn next. Pupils know what they need to do to improve. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

In English and mathematics lessons, teachers use assessment well to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers support pupils who do not read fluently to catch up quickly. However, adults do not read aloud to pupils often enough. Pupils are not certain who their favourite authors are or which books they like to read.

Staff have had some training to improve their subject knowledge in some areas of the curriculum. Leaders have identified that further development of classroom support staff's subject knowledge is needed. Leaders have plans in place to provide this.

Lessons are calm. Leaders and staff have put clear routines in place. These help pupils to manage their feelings and remain on task. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They follow class routines, take turns and listen to each other. Pupils are resilient learners. They are willing to 'have a go', even when they get something wrong. Pupils are highly motivated and display high levels of concentration and interest in their work.

The curriculum provides pupils with a wealth of rich experiences. This promotes their personal development exceptionally well. Pupils take part in visits to local areas of interest, and they learn about different cultures. There are regular visits to the local university and professional football club ground, where pupils use the sports facilities. Pupils carry out activities to help the community. For example, pupils have cleared overgrown areas and planted trees and spring-flowering bulbs at a local park. Pupils support charities, such as 'red nose day,' by organising fundraising events in school. They are proud of the work they have done and confidently take on leadership and team roles. Some pupils are enthusiastic about helping to improve the environment. They act as 'switch off' monitors. Their job is to check that lights and electrical equipment are off when not in use.

The staff team's focus on pupils' physical and mental well-being is exemplary. Pupils learn yoga and relaxation techniques, play music, sing and dance. They use their skills to take part in school talent shows. There are residential trips where pupils develop their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils are keen to talk about their skiing trip to Italy.

The sixth form curriculum prepares students well for adulthood and life beyond school. Leaders create a bespoke timetable to meet the needs of each student. Sixth-form students learn about the world of work. They also learn how to be healthy, how to develop their independence and how to be an active member in their community. Some of them help to run a community cafe with pupils from other schools. They learn how to serve customers, prepare food and drinks and handle money. Sixth-form students are successful in completing their studies and are well prepared for their next stage in employment, education or training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff receive regular training and updates about safeguarding. They spot when pupils need help and support. Staff are vigilant and ensure that they report any concerns promptly. There are strong systems in place to check and record the safety of pupils. Leaders and trustees are knowledgeable about their duties to safeguard and protect pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have focused on the quality of English and mathematics across the school. Recent changes to the science curriculum are not yet embedded. Not all staff have the subject-specific expertise they need to support pupils effectively in their learning. Leaders need to ensure staff receive the relevant training and support they need to be able to deliver the full curriculum effectively.

- A few pupils do not read with confidence and fluency. The recent work to promote reading is starting to help pupils develop their early reading skills. However, pupils have not yet had opportunities to frequently practise their skills so that they might improve their confidence and fluency in reading. Leaders should ensure that teachers consider ways to encourage pupils to communicate about what they have read and heard, so that pupils seek out materials they want to read independently and develop a love for reading.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138526
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10110588
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	69
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Hurn
Headteacher	Sharon Common
Website	www.portlandcollege.org
Date of previous inspection	21–22 June 2017

Information about this school

- Portland Academy is part of Ascent Academies Trust.
- The academy had an Ofsted monitoring visit on 17 December 2018.
- Pupil numbers have risen since the last inspection. The number of pupils in the sixth form has also increased.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

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

- We met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, assistant headteacher and the designated safeguarding leader. We also met with some teachers.

- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. We met three members of the trust, talked about their role as the local board and looked at their minutes.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils were scrutinised. We looked at safeguarding records and the school's central record, which records the checks made on adults to ensure that they are safe to work with children. We also checked that staff have regular safeguarding training and updates.
- We discussed the school's records on attendance and behaviour with leaders.
- We analysed the school's self-evaluation and development plans.
- We met with pupils in lessons and at social times.
- We met with members of staff and took account of the 48 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- We took account of the views of 16 parents who responded to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View. We also spoke to parents as they were dropping pupils off at school.
- The inspection focused particularly on English and communication, mathematics and cognition, Science, Physical Education and preparation for adulthood in the sixth form. This included meeting with senior leaders, curriculum leaders and teachers, discussing curriculum plans, visiting lessons, speaking to pupils about their learning, and looking at pupils' work.

Inspection team

Louise Greatrex, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Berni Moorcroft	Ofsted Inspector
Fiona Dixon	Ofsted Inspector

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