

Inspection of Plymstock School

Church Road, Plymstock, Plymouth, Devon PL9 9AZ

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy learning. They aspire to do well. As one pupil commented, echoed by many others, teachers inspire him to 'go above and beyond'. Pupils have many opportunities to broaden their knowledge about the world around them. For example, pupils visit the theatre to see plays, such as 'An Inspector Calls'. Pupils take part in a range of sports and art clubs.

Pupils and students in the sixth form develop strong leadership skills through a range of peer mentoring and tutoring roles. For example, Year 8 pupils train to support younger pupils with their reading. Some Year 11 boys support younger boys with their mental health. Year 10 pupils support younger pupils with the transition from primary school. Sixth-form students tutor younger pupils in English and mathematics. Pupils and sixth-form students carry out these roles with great responsibility and sensitivity.

Pupils and students in the sixth form receive appropriate careers guidance. They learn about the routes into university, apprenticeships and employment.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils are respectful and kind to each other. Pupils state that bullying is resolved by staff. However, a minority of pupils do not behave well.

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

Leaders and staff have worked to develop a well-structured curriculum. Leaders have planned the curriculum to ensure that pupils build on their prior knowledge from Years 7 to Year 11. Students in the sixth form continue to develop the knowledge they learned at key stage 4. In English, pupils develop strong reading and writing skills. For example, Year 10 pupils write insightfully about the features of Shakespearean tragedy. Pupils learn to speak with accurate pronunciation in French and German. As a result of improvements to the curriculum, more pupils have chosen to study a language at A level. However, leaders have not structured the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum as effectively as other subjects. Teachers have variable subject knowledge in PSHE. Consequently, pupils do not learn about the world beyond school as well as they should.

Staff use assessment effectively to check pupils' understanding before they move on to more complex concepts. Teachers adapt their teaching to address pupils' misconceptions and help them to remember what they have learned. Through close collaboration with the trust, leaders and staff develop their knowledge of the most effective strategies to deliver the curriculum. Therefore, most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well.

Pupils who require additional help with reading follow a planned and detailed programme of support. Pupils with significant difficulty in reading study an age-

appropriate phonics programme. In addition, teachers in a range of subjects prioritise the teaching of reading so that all pupils can learn successfully. In each subject, pupils expand their knowledge of vocabulary. As a result, most pupils write with accuracy about a range of concepts.

Leaders have designed a detailed careers programme for all pupils, including students in the sixth form. Pupils in Year 10 and students in Year 12 complete work experience to help them consider their next steps. Pupils and students in the sixth form visit universities, such as Exeter and Plymouth, to prepare them for future study.

Sixth-form students are proud of the education they receive at the school. They have many opportunities to develop their understanding of the world around them. For example, they volunteer with Age UK, learn about the horror of the Holocaust through the 'Lessons from Auschwitz' project, and support younger pupils in lessons. Leaders support students' aspirations very well and enable them to extend their knowledge of the curriculum through theatre trips and visits to art galleries.

Although most pupils aspire to achieve and behave well, a minority of pupils do not. Leaders do not ensure that all staff apply the agreed behaviour strategies consistently. Consequently, in some lessons, a few pupils disrupt the learning of others.

The trust has established a new system of governance. There is a clear rationale for these changes. However, it is too early to judge its effectiveness. Through trust-led reviews of the curriculum, school leaders are held to account. Early careers teachers feel very well supported. Overwhelmingly, staff are proud to work at the school and feel that their well-being is supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the right support at the right time. They work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils' emotional and physical safety is protected. Leaders and staff are meticulous in the recording of safeguarding concerns.

Staff receive safeguarding training, including regular updates. They know how to tell if a child is at risk of harm. Leaders carry out background checks on all members of staff to ensure they are suitable to work with children.

Pupils state that they have a trusted adult with whom they can share their worries. Pupils also learn how to keep safe when on the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The behaviour of a minority of pupils is not managed effectively. Consequently, these pupils do not learn well. Leaders need to ensure that the agreed behaviour approaches are implemented consistently so that all pupils behave respectfully.
- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is not well planned. As a result, pupils do not learn enough about the world beyond school. Leaders must ensure that the personal development programme supports pupils to be well prepared for life in twenty-first century Britain.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	136568
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10268797
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,637
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	185
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
Headteacher	Alan Yendell
Website	www.plymstockschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Plymstock School is part of the Westcountry Schools Trust.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and members of the leadership team.
- An inspector held discussions with the director of education, the chair of the board and chief executive officer of the Westcountry Schools Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and religious studies. In each subject, inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with staff to consider their views.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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