



# Portland School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 108884  
**LEA** Sunderland  
**Inspection number** 278072  
**Inspection dates** 14 March 2006 to 15 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Alan Tattersall

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Weymouth Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Chapelgarth
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		Sunderland, Tyne and Wear
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5536050
<b>Number on roll</b>	152	<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5536048
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Dorothy Elliott
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jennifer Chart

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Portland is a large special school serving the city of Sunderland. The pupils all have severe learning difficulties and a quarter of them have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school also admits a growing number of pupils who have challenging behaviour. More than half of all of the pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum. There are a few pupils from minority ethnic groups for whom English is an additional language. Nearly half the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is a high proportion. There are 16 pupils who are looked after in public care.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a good school which gives good value for money. The teaching and learning are good and consequently pupils achieve well, make good overall progress throughout the school, and are well prepared for the next stage of their education and work. Pupils make outstandingly good progress in their personal development; they behave well, feel safe and enjoy school very much. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well and the quality of care provided for them is excellent. Leadership and management are good. The school's self-evaluation judges its overall effectiveness and the strength of its leadership as outstanding. Although these judgements do not match those of the inspection and are too generous, the school accurately identifies its strengths and weaknesses. For example, the subject leaders are not monitoring the quality of lessons in their subjects well enough, and teachers do not always make enough use of assessment data to match work to the pupils' abilities. The school has a good record of recent improvements and demonstrates the capacity to improve further.

not applicable

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness of the provision is good. This differs from the school's own over-generous evaluation of its effectiveness as outstanding. Lessons are interesting and motivate the students to learn. The teaching is good and ensures that, irrespective of their difficulties, the students make good progress in their learning of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). Students benefit from excellent accommodation and resources and take part in a wide range of learning activities which they enjoy, for example, essential life skills. Students receive excellent care and support and guidance for them is good. The curriculum is good. Links with the local college of further education enrich students' learning and add a great deal to their social and educational experiences. Students gain much from their involvement in their 'Young Enterprise' scheme and are rightly proud of their achievements. To build upon the success of its current work, the school is planning a wider range of courses and vocational training for the students. Preparation for the students' transition to the next stage of education is good and appreciated by parents.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- make better use of assessment to match the level of work to the pupils' abilities.
- involve subject leaders more in monitoring and evaluating their subjects to make improvements in teaching.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. They join the school in Year 7 with standards in language, mathematics and in their personal development well below those expected nationally of children of this age. Pupils make good overall progress because of the generally good teaching and individual help, and achieve the targets set for them in their individual education plans. They make good progress in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT and this achievement helps them to learn other subjects, as shown by the improving standard of their completed work and the school's records of their progress. The school meets its challenging targets for Year 11 pupils. The results in AQA, ASDAN and the Mayor's Award represent good achievement for these pupils in English, mathematics, ICT and life skills. There is no difference in the achievement of any group of pupils and they all make equal progress. However, some pupils do not make the progress they should on occasions when the teacher does not match the work well enough to their abilities. The school aims to raise standards further through improvements in teaching.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' overall progress in their personal development and well-being and their attitudes to learning are outstandingly good. Attendance is better than that found in most schools of a similar type. Pupils' behaviour is generally good and steadily improves. Incidences of misbehaviour usually stem from the pupils' learning difficulties and, when they occur, they are contained well by the staff. The majority of pupils get on well with each other, their teachers and teaching assistants. Their relationships with other pupils and with staff are excellent and most pupils are considerate and fully understand the effect their actions have on other people. Pupils show concern for others through generous charitable giving. Those who can express an opinion feel well cared for and say that they have someone they can talk to if they have a personal problem. Pupils like to meet visitors and are happy to talk and write about their experiences in school, which are overwhelmingly positive. Parents confirm that their children are keen to come to school because they enjoy lessons and want to learn. Pupils enthusiastically accept responsibilities, such as membership of the school council which has drawn up the school's anti-bullying policy. They feel safe in school; many of them understand what makes for a healthy diet and the need for physical exercise. Taking part in activities, such as 'Young Enterprise', ensures that they develop their economic awareness. Pupils' progress in their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is also outstandingly good and they respond well to opportunities to experience and appreciate the cultural and religious diversity of modern Britain.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching is good and the pupils therefore learn effectively. Excellent relationships and the teachers' constant concern for pupils' personal development ensure that pupils are happy, confident and have positive attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants play an important role in providing the support that pupils need. Teachers plan interesting lessons which motivate the pupils to learn. Teachers and teaching assistants question their pupils with great care to ensure that they understand what they are doing. This encourages pupils to discuss their ideas with others and to show what they have learned. Occasionally, however, the teachers do not use assessment data well enough to match the work to the full range of abilities in the class. Consequently, in such lessons, the pupils make slower progress than they should.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs effectively, including those of the many pupils who are disapplied from the National Curriculum. A wide range of enrichment activities helps pupils to extend their learning. The Mayor's Award enables pupils to develop their skills in a similar way to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Many after-school clubs provide rich opportunities for pupils to extend their learning and to participate in team games. Drama is a strong part of the school curriculum, and many pupils participate in musical productions. Regular use of community, school and college facilities enhance the range of learning and social opportunities. The school runs an accredited wheelchair-handling course which is also attended by pupils from other schools. A good range of accredited courses for pupils beyond Year 9 is provided and the school plans to extend the range, for example, to provide wider accreditation for pupils' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, in order to prepare them as well as possible for leaving school and the world of work.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The provision of care, guidance and support is outstanding. This school is characterised by the high quality of care for all pupils, underpinned firmly by effective staff training. Child protection procedures are good and the school ensures that checks are made on all staff. Measures to ensure pupils' health and safety are very effective. The school's partnership with a wide range of external services to meet pupils' needs is excellent, and with specialist medical services it is exemplary. This ensures that pupils receive the care they need. Their progress in their personal and social skills is closely monitored and shared with parents. Pupils' progress is monitored very well and this enables the school to provide excellent academic guidance and support. The school provides information for parents and carers through questionnaires, communications, parents'

meetings, reports, and reviews. Most parents are responsive and positive about how the school helps them. Pupils and their parents value the helpful procedures to prepare for moving on to the next stage of learning or beyond the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good overall. The school finds it difficult to recruit governors and the governing body is presently under strength. Nevertheless, governance is effective and the governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation is thorough but tends to be too generous, for example, in its assessment of leadership and management, and of the school's overall effectiveness. In spite of this, however, the school identifies its strengths and weaknesses accurately. The school has a good record of improvement which demonstrates the capacity to improve further. The improvements in the accommodation have been excellent. Senior managers have provided effective training for new teachers without experience in similar, special schools. The school also correctly identifies that improvements are needed in the monitoring of teaching and learning, particularly by the subject leaders, and in the use of assessment in lesson planning, in order to improve teaching even more and to raise standards further.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

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14 March 2006

Dear Pupils and Sixth Form Students

Thank you for making us feel welcome in your school. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. You are very friendly and polite and helped us to find out more about the school.

We agree with your parents that the school is helping you to make good progress.

These are the things that we liked.

You really enjoy lessons and work hard.

Your personal development is excellent, behaviour is good and you get on very well with each other.

The school takes excellent care of you.

You go on interesting visits and have an excellent range of clubs.

You learn a lot about how people in the world live.

The headteacher and governors are working hard to make more improvements.

We have asked your headteacher and governors to continue to improve the school, in particular to see that you always work at the right level.

Yours sincerely

Mr A Tattersall and Mr A Pearson

Inspectors