



# Plymstock School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 113537  
**LEA** Plymouth  
**Inspection number** 279193  
**Inspection dates** 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Geoff Hancock AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Church Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Plymstock
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Plymouth, Devon PL9 9AZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 402679
<b>Number on roll</b>	1531	<b>Fax number</b>	01752 484018
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr Andrew Williams
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Sean Sweeney

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279193
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Plymstock School achieved Specialist Sports College status in 2002. Nearly all students are from White British backgrounds and most live in the immediate neighbourhood. The level of deprivation in the community is low and the proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is below average. There is little movement of students to and from other schools. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average and the number of students with learning difficulties below average.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Plymstock is a good school with some outstanding features. The leadership and management of the school are good. The inspection agrees with the school's own judgement of its effectiveness. The school has implemented an effective range of strategies to maintain the high standards and achievement seen at the time of the last inspection. Students make outstanding progress during Years 7 to 9. Whilst this progress is not maintained during Years 10 and 11 the overall progress remains good. The majority of parents are happy with the school and the education it provides. However, around 30% of parents who replied to a confidential Ofsted questionnaire are concerned about communication between the school and home.

The good teaching ensures that students show positive attitudes to their work and make good progress. The teachers' good subject knowledge lends confidence to their teaching styles. Plymstock provides a very supportive and challenging environment for all students but particularly those who have specific learning difficulties; these students achieve very well as a result.

The Sports College designation has transformed the sporting opportunities for the school and local community and is having a big impact on the students health, enjoyment and well-being.

The school has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to improve. This has been accomplished alongside the drive on learning and achievement and its successful development as a specialist sports college. The school has formed good working partnerships that have contributed to the achievement and well-being of the students. The school has used its resources effectively and provides good value for money

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

### **Grade: 3**

While the school judges the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form to be good inspectors judge it as satisfactory. Although there are strengths in the sixth form, in particular, the curriculum which is outstanding, students' achievement is only satisfactory and standards are average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, they are less effective than in other parts of the school because some lessons are too slow and teacher's expectations are sometimes too low. Students in the sixth form are mature, sensible young adults. They enjoy their education, relate very well to their teachers and have the skills to work well on their own. They speak warmly of their educational experiences, value the positive ethos of the school and benefit from easy access to computers. The curriculum is outstanding. The links that the school has thoughtfully developed with groups of local schools and colleges are very beneficial to the range of opportunities available to students. Course guidance is thorough and students are well cared for. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent initiatives have improved the monitoring of students' progress so that learners are aware of their targets in examinations and the best way to reach them. Monitoring of teaching and the promotion of good practice is developing. There are some limited

examples of outstanding practice but the impact of these developments has yet to be seen in improved achievement. These encouraging changes mean that there is good capacity for improvement. The sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Make the teaching more active and engaging so that students become less dependent on their teachers and more confident in taking decisions for themselves.
- Raise the achievement of students in the sixth form by improving teaching and making the monitoring of performance more rigorous.
- Take greater account of the views of students and their parents and carers.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students enter the school with average standards. By the end of Year 9 the standards they reach are exceptionally high reflecting outstanding progress. This progress is largely a result of the outstanding progress in science and mathematics. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average and show good progress overall. Students with statements of special educational needs make better progress than those without and girls achieve higher standards than boys. Some of the able students in Year 9 do not go on to achieve the highest grades. Students are set challenging targets and their progress is now being monitored. However, because these targets are based upon their average Year 9 test scores and not on individual subjects, the targets for some of the most able students are not as challenging as they could be. In 2005 the school just failed to meet the GCSE targets that were set. The school welcomes students of all abilities into the sixth form. Standards reached in examinations in the sixth form are average and students' achievement on both academic and on other courses is satisfactory. The scrutiny of students' work shows that students are making satisfactory progress although the school recognises correctly that further improvement is needed.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The students' enjoyment of lessons and the super range of extra-curricular activities they take part in reflect their good personal development and well-being. Attendance is good and there are very few exclusions. The school insists on politeness, courtesy and respect; student behaviour is outstanding. The students take full advantage of the exceptional opportunities provided by the sports college to develop healthy life-styles and good leadership qualities. They mix well and are confident with staff and other adults. They fulfil the many voluntary activities they undertake in the wider community with maturity and good-will. The responsibilities they fulfil around school give them a clear sense of right and wrong but they are not given enough opportunity to show initiative and independence. Students do not tolerate bullying or racism and have a reasonable understanding of the variety of cultural beliefs and values in the

wider society. Plans for spiritual development have improved but have not yet resulted in enough reflection, either in lessons or in tutor time. A good programme of activities from Year 7 onwards prepares the students well for the world of work. The students support the school council but many say that they would like their views to be taken more seriously. Sixth form students' personal development is good. They make positive contributions to the school community and have very good attitudes, and these contribute well to their learning.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching in Years 7 – 11 is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of subjects and syllabus requirements. They use this well to prepare students for tests and examinations, particularly in Year 9. Students are very appreciative of help they receive from teachers, both in and beyond lessons. There are many extra sessions, which support students' examination preparation.

Teachers share target grades with students and when they mark their work usually tell them what they need to do to improve; this helps students learn. In some subjects, such as science, assessment practice is excellent. The lesson planning of some teachers does not always take into account the different needs of all the students. Teachers manage students and resources in a very structured way leading to excellent behaviour and safe, well ordered lessons. However, students are not given enough opportunities to use their initiative, work in groups or learn by finding out for themselves. They rely too heavily on their teachers to tell them what they need to do.

Inspectors found teaching in the sixth form to be satisfactory rather than good, as the school believes. There are strengths in teaching in the subject knowledge of teachers and their growing use of assessment. However, some sixth form lessons are insufficiently stimulating or challenging and as a result, students are not always made to think for themselves or work hard.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

Pupils of all ages are very well served by an outstanding curriculum. The school plans very carefully to ensure that all pupils have a wide range of subjects from which to choose. The quality of guidance they receive encourages them all, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, to follow the best possible courses.

There is a super range of opportunities for pupils to take part in enrichment activities. There is a vast range of sporting opportunities provided by the school and students enthusiastically join in with these in very high numbers. The curriculum includes a

good range of work-related learning and is developing an increasing range of enterprise activities.

The programmes and activities offered to sixth formers are outstanding. Great breadth of choice is ensured by the impressive range of links with other local schools and colleges. The school also offers an outstanding range of enrichment activities, which many students enthusiastically embrace.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The care of students is one of the school's top priorities; students acknowledge this and they all feel secure and safe. Staff at the school have had comprehensive training in child protection, and closely follow procedures.

Students who have learning difficulties and disabilities are very well provided for. Frequent discussions with parents and other interested agencies support the setting up of targets for students' social and academic learning. Within the special unit for students with learning difficulties, students make very good progress because they are individually guided and encouraged by specialist teachers and support staff. Many parents of these children told the inspectors how delighted they are with this provision. However, when taught in normal lessons the support given to them is often not as good because teachers are not always fully aware of their learning targets.

The courses for personal, social and citizenship education guide students well. Students receive good careers advice, with access to a careers library and staff. Good opportunities for work experience also help to guide students' thoughts on the possibilities for their future lives.

Care and guidance in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students are well cared for and well informed about future educational and career choices in the thorough personal, social and health education programme; however, the guidance given them by teachers about their school work has not been rigorous enough.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The high standards at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. The acting headteacher and his senior colleagues judge leadership and management and its impact on students' achievement to be good, this view is supported by the inspection. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses; it knows what it needs to do to continue to improve and it is now well placed to do so; however, too little account has been taken of the views of the pupils and their parents, many of whom feel that the school does not keep them well informed. There is a common sense of purpose amongst the staff and

the top priority for the school is to raise the attainment for all students. This drive to raise standards is reflected in a number of new initiatives designed to add greater rigour to teaching and learning and to monitor more effectively the school's performance.

The school's vision of a challenging yet caring school is reflected in a set of plans designed to make further improvements. There are many procedures in place to monitor the work of the school. Although these are effective, closer monitoring is needed to ensure that all students, in particular the more able, achieve as much as they should.

The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory and improving. The school has not been rigorous enough in checking either student progress or the quality of teaching. New procedures now in place are beginning to have a positive influence on teaching and achievement but this has not yet been reflected in examination results.



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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
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	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	3

<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	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

<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**

My colleagues and I greatly enjoyed spending time in your school. Thank you all very much for your courteous behaviour and the open and frank way that you spoke to us about your school. You are rightly proud of your school and enjoy the rich and varied opportunities that it gives you.

Many of your parents and carers responded to a confidential questionnaire or talked to us and we also took your views and concerns into account when making our judgements. We know that it has been a difficult time for the school over the last few months; you told us that despite this the school has carried on as normal. I encourage you to read the report but this letter is to let you know what your school does well and what would help it to be even better.

We believe that Plymstock is a good school that provides some outstanding opportunities for you, especially in the area of sport. You told us that the teaching is good and that your fellow students nearly always behave well; we agree with you. During your time from Year 7 - 9 most of you make rapid progress and get very good results in your national tests. In Years 10 and 11 you don't do quite as well as in Years 7 - 9 but still get very good GCSE results. The many subjects and courses you can choose from mean that all of you can find something that suits you really well. We really like the fact that some students who have learning difficulties are especially well cared for and achieve well as a result.

We have asked the school to look carefully at the sixth form in order to ensure that more students get higher grades. We want the school to make you less dependent on teachers and more confident in taking decisions yourselves. We have also asked the school to listen more carefully to what the students and parents say and take their views more seriously. The school is going to make better checks on how well you are all doing and is going to do its best to ensure that more students get A\* and A grades.

Once again, thank you all very much for talking to us, I wish you every success in the future.