

Eggbuckland Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113542
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	289668
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Mary Hoather

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1213
6th form	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robbie McVicar
Headteacher	Katrina Borowski
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2002
School address	Westcott Close Eggbuckland Plymouth PL6 5YB
Telephone number	01752 779061
Fax number	01752 766650

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Eggbuckland is a very large, popular and oversubscribed school on the outskirts of Plymouth. Most students are White British and fewer than average have learning difficulties. There are 10% more boys than girls in the school. Students come from very mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Some speak English as an additional language. The school is in its fourth designation as a specialist technology college and has had training school status since 2003. There is a designated resource base in the school for students with hearing impairment.

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 and improving school. It has built a reputation nationally for innovation and initiative in the use of technology to support learning. Its friendly 'Learning, Caring, Achieving' ethos is focused on raising levels of achievement for all students. This is done through students' individual learning plans and more robust, consistent approaches to teaching and learning. After a general decline from the high standards and very good achievement at the last inspection, the new principal and her senior team have put in place strategies that have reversed this trend. Standards and achievement are good overall. Examination and test results improved significantly in 2006 and students' current performance suggests they will be better still for 2007. Similarly, whilst the rate of progress for students is not as high as at the last inspection, they still make good progress overall from Years 7 to 11 and particularly in Years 10 to 11. Standards are once more above the national average in Year 11 and in mathematics are well above average in Year 9.

Students enjoy school. This is because they find their lessons 'fun' and interesting as a result of the varied activities and the very good use of technology in most lessons. Attendance is in line with the national average. Students appreciate the good relationships they have with their teachers, the good curriculum, including the excellent range of courses available in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, as well as the extra-curricular activities. They feel safe in school and that any bullying is dealt with effectively, and they appreciate the good support and guidance that they receive from their tutors. The 'Preparation for Life' (P4L) programme of personal, social, moral and citizenship education that they all receive helps promote the excellent student leadership in the school and has won national acclaim. The autonomous Student Leadership Team provides a strong student voice which has influenced some improvements to facilities but has also brought to the fore concerns that students and some parents have about low-level disruption caused by students in some lessons. This is not managed consistently by staff and this can mar the otherwise generally good behaviour and learning of students. Inspectors agree with students that teaching is good overall. Students' progress is tracked well, with appropriate interventions for any who are lower achieving. Targets are set for students, monitored regularly by tutors and discussed with parents during the 'Review Days'. The use of data to give students guidance on what they need to do to improve and better meet their individual learning needs is insufficiently developed. Similarly, there is insufficient focus on the development of literacy skills across the Key Stage 3 curriculum to enable all students to engage in all activities and achieve higher standards by Year 9.

Leadership and management at all levels are good. Improved communications and the recent revision of responsibilities in the rationalised senior team have resulted in a more cohesive line management structure. Performance management in the school is more rigorous and robust. Middle leaders are held to account well and they in turn manage their teams with a clear focus on improving outcomes for students. Monitoring of teaching is now much more systematic. Self-evaluation processes, such as the cycle of 'Departmental Reviews', are really starting to have an impact. With the recent strong appointments of key staff in both senior and middle leadership teams, and the embedding of new structures and systems, the school's capacity to improve is excellent. Provision in the hearing impaired unit is highly effective and students make good progress.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and provides good value for money. It is well led and managed, with a clear focus on building on students' previous successes. This is particularly evident in the productive partnership with several other schools in the city and the consortium with local training providers. These links enable students to follow a wide range of academic and vocational courses. The teaching is good and students are well motivated. Standards and achievement are good, particularly in the vocational courses. The student leadership programme helps students develop a very good awareness of citizenship and a wide range of personal and learning skills, preparing them well for the future. Students are very appreciative of the outstanding personal and academic guidance provided by the school, and the sixth form enjoys a high reputation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all staff manage behaviour consistently across the school.
- Ensure that all subject teachers give clearer guidance to students on how to improve in order to meet their Individual Learning Plan target grades and levels.
- Ensure students have planned opportunities to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 3.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement and standards are good overall. Students enter in Year 7 with about average attainment overall. From then, the general pattern is that progress increases as they move through the school. By Year 11, and in the sixth form, standards are now above average. Although standards declined from a high base in 2003 to below national averages in 2005, strong improvements were attained in 2006 in both Year 9 and Year 11. Students' current performance promises to improve standards further for 2007. Students enter the school with standards generally in line with national averages. By the end of Year 11, standards and the progress students make while at the school are slightly higher than the national average. Most targets were met or surpassed in 2006 and standards in mathematics, particularly, improved well in both key stages. Progress from Key Stage 3 to 4 has been consistently good over four years and the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics has risen steeply. Similarly, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in any subjects increased. This was helped by considerable improvement in a number of other subjects, especially design and technology and history. In Key Stage 4, all groups achieve well, with girls doing best of all. Students attached to the hearing impaired unit achieve well and make good progress, particularly in their speaking and listening skills.

Students' progress in Key Stage 3 is the least rapid and has changed little in recent years. There is little difference between boys' and girls' attainment in this key stage. Science results at Year 9 and particularly in the sixth form are often weaker than in other subjects and are the current focus of improvement in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Behaviour is good and contributes to the good achievement. However, a small minority of students disrupt some lessons, which restricts learning for everyone. The number of exclusions is falling as the school has successfully introduced some alternative strategies for meeting the academic and personal needs of some disaffected students, including 'The Bridge' inclusion centre on site. Most students have a very positive attitude towards learning and would recommend their school to others. They welcome the opportunities to take responsibility, for example, by raising money for charities, organising events, and serving on the Student Leadership Team. The commitment many students show to supporting and developing the school community, as well as contributing outside it, results in good moral and social development. Other students gain from working alongside their hearing impaired peers, for example, and enjoy using their signing skills. Students recognise the desirability of promoting a healthier lifestyle and shared their critical views of what they regard as the overpricing of healthy food options in the school canteen. This led to an investigation and price comparisons with other schools. They appreciate the high quality of the P4L programme, although the independent learning skills of some are underdeveloped. Students adopt safe practices and are well prepared for their future careers.

Many sixth formers contribute to the school community by helping younger students as mentors and leaders. Some younger students regard the sixth form as rather 'separate' however.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good in the main school and in the sixth form. The many strengths are the good interactive use of whiteboards, with interesting displays and activities to motivate learners, the good relationships and productive working atmosphere maintained in most lessons, good questioning which invites thoughtful and extended responses, and lessons which appeal to the range of students' known preferred learning styles.

In less effective, but nevertheless satisfactory, lessons, the teaching engages fewer students because work is not matched sufficiently to their needs so they make less progress. The disruptive behaviour in a few lessons happens mainly because some teachers do not consistently set clear expectations for behaviour or apply the school's 'Behaviour Management Pathway'.

Marking is evident in students' books but it is not consistently informative enough about how students can improve in relation to their targets. The needs of students with specific learning difficulties, and those with hearing impairment, are well assessed. With skilled support by staff, they are enabled to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is good overall and outstanding in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. As a result of the 'Individual Learning Pathways' that have been developed from age 14 to 19, students have an excellent range of academic and vocational courses, especially in the sixth form, that are responsive to their individual learning needs and interests. Throughout the school, opportunities are afforded through the school's specialist status and initiatives such as a group for laptop users have rightly led to students being recognised nationally as some of 'the most advanced e-learners in the country'. The school's developing electronic 'Learning Gateway' is beginning to help personalise each student's curriculum. The P4L programme is carefully constructed to support all students' personal, social, moral, religious, citizenship, careers and health education. Both hearing and hearing impaired students benefit greatly from working alongside each other in lessons. The hearing impaired students gain much from highly effective sessions designed to meet their individual needs. All students benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities, sometimes in collaboration with local schools.

The school has recognised that the Key Stage 3 curriculum needs revision to engage all students better and to build their basic learning competencies, especially in literacy. It is also improving the science curriculum to better meet the needs of all students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support for students are good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Students say particularly that P4L gives them a strong sense of security and personal well-being in school. The school's child protection procedures are robust and well understood. The high quality of careers advice, particularly in the sixth form, is validated by the school's continuing 'Investors in Careers' status. Gifted and talented students are appropriately challenged and supported and there is extensive and well-targeted support for students who need it, including those with specific learning difficulties, the hearing impaired students and those for whom English is an additional language. The recently developed support through a more flexible curriculum, for example, for those in 'The Bridge' inclusion building, is also good. The school has made considerable strides in providing more extensive academic monitoring and guidance through the collection and analysis of student data, but because not all subject teachers are using this fully on a daily basis in lessons, not all students know their targets in subjects or how best to meet them. Parents are increasingly involved in the evaluation of their children's progress through well-attended 'Review Days'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good, both in the main school and the sixth form. National workforce remodelling has been used well to make helpful changes and involve support staff.

The new and, cohesive senior team is very focused on improving monitoring and evaluation in the school, which is starting to bring more consistent approaches to teaching and learning. Clearer communications and expectations of middle leaders lead to good self-evaluation, accountability and planning, taking into account the views of students and parents. As the principal said, all leaders are now 'singing from the same hymn sheet' and are successfully challenged and supported by governors. These systems now impact noticeably in the upturn in achievement and standards. The school knows itself well and with the recent appointment of some strong key leaders in both the senior and middle leadership teams, the school has excellent capacity to improve.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
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

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for helping us with the inspection. You were very courteous and polite.

We were impressed by many aspects of your school. Those of you we spoke to told us how much you enjoy school and gave us a clear view about the things you think are good about your school. We have taken these, and your parents' views, into account in arriving at our judgements. We understand why you would recommend your school to others because it provides a good education for you, with some outstanding aspects.

The particular strengths are:

- the good progress you make whilst you are at the school
- the good way most of you behave
- the interesting variety of activities in most lessons and the good teaching
- the way you are able to use so many electronic applications in your learning
- the way your P4L programme really does prepare you for life
- your excellent student leadership
- the outstanding range of courses and opportunities you have in Years 10 to 13
- the way your principal and senior staff are working with your curriculum and year team leaders to improve your school.

In order to help you achieve higher standards we have asked the school to do three things:

- Ensure that all staff deal with the bad behaviour of the few students who disrupt your lessons firmly and in the same way.
- Ensure that all subject teachers tell you precisely what you need to do to improve your work and meet your target levels and grades.
- Help you improve your reading and writing before you leave Year 9.

With best wishes for your happy and successful education at Egguckland.