

Penrice Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112051
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310775
Inspection date	9 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Valerie Pearson HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1328
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Fisher
Headteacher	David Parker
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Charlestown Road St Austell PL25 3NR
Telephone number	01726 72163
Fax number	01726 64901

Age group	11-16
Inspection date	9 May 2008
Inspection number	310775

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: students' progress and the standards they attain; aspects of students' personal development and well-being; and the impact of leadership and management on improving students' progress and standards, paying particular attention to self-review and academic guidance. Evidence was gathered from the following sources: the school's self-evaluation form and other review documents; nationally published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; observation of the school at work in lessons and at break times; discussions with students, staff, two members of the governing body and the college's school improvement partner; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. Inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Penrice Community College is a larger than average secondary school. Most students are White British, with very few from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school has had specialist school status in languages since 1997, with vocational studies as a second specialism since 2007. The school gained training school status in 2007. The school has gained a number of awards, including International School status at gold level, Healthy School status and Artsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Penrice Community College is a good school. It is an inclusive community with a strong commitment to doing the very best for every student. A result of this is that students' personal development and well-being are good. At the heart of this is the comprehensive support the school gives to its students, including well-regarded pastoral care. One parent 'delighted with the school' expresses the view that it 'provides a professional but also caring environment for the pupils'. A strength of the school's provision is the excellent support given to students who are vulnerable, and particularly those young people who are looked after. Through very good partnerships with external agencies, enhanced through the work of the school's Student and Family Centre, students with a variety of needs receive high quality support.

The school has been going through a period of rapid change. This is being effectively led and managed by the good, relatively new headteacher, who is ably supported by members of the senior leadership team. Well-focused strategies designed to promote both students' personal development and their academic achievements are in place and beginning to reap benefits. For example, students enjoy school and display positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour, once identified as a cause for concern by many students, parents, staff and governors, is now good. A small minority of those parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, however, still highlighted concerns about inappropriate student behaviour. Students' attendance, which dipped below the national average, is now good, the numbers of students excluded from school have fallen and the proportion of students arriving late for school has dropped significantly. These improvements are the result of determined action taken by the school.

Students' enjoyment of school is evident in the good contribution they make to the school community, responding with enthusiasm to the expanding range of opportunities offered to them. They accept responsibilities willingly and their contributions make a difference. Such contributions include their work through the school council; participation in reviews, for example, on the quality of food provided in school; support to other students as trained mentors and as junior sports leaders; and help to primary school pupils learning modern foreign languages. Students explain confidently the essential elements of a healthy lifestyle, appreciating the healthy food available in school and enjoying the range of physical activities on offer for them. Students report that they feel safe in school, that they have adults they can turn to if they need help and that they are confident that the school will deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. The well-targeted strategies to improve students' achievements are being pursued with the same energy and resolution as those promoting students' personal development. The school has a record of students making good progress from the time they enter the school and reaching above-average standards by the time they leave. This was not the case in 2007, however, when GCSE results dropped and students' progress was satisfactory. Progress and standards were also satisfactory at Key Stage 3. In particular, the slower rates of progress and elements of underachievement in mathematics across the school are rightly highlighted as concerns by all members of the school community, including students and parents. In contrast, the good impact of specialist school status is reflected in the sustained good results in modern foreign languages. The school responded quickly to address the issues identified through a detailed analysis of the 2007 and previous years' results. They welcomed and acted on good support and advice from the college's school improvement partner and the local authority, particularly in strengthening the use of data and improving provision in mathematics. Rapid improvements in the use of data on students' progress and standards have resulted in suitably

challenging individual and whole-school targets being set. Regular and careful monitoring of students' progress has informed a range of appropriate targeted interventions to support students' learning. Students know their targets and understand what they need to do to improve their work to meet them. The school's own evidence shows that the current year groups are making good progress and reaching above-average overall standards. The school rightly identifies, however, securing and sustaining further improvements in mathematics as a top priority. It is particularly important to ensure students are consistently challenged to do better, given the context of the high number of changes to the teaching staff within the subject.

The school has a strong commitment to improving teaching and learning through analysis of regular monitoring of the quality of lessons, clearly identifying areas for improvement and providing targeted training and support. For example, training to enhance teachers' understanding of data has been critical in helping teachers to match learning activities more closely to students' needs. The school's focus on teaching means that it is now good overall. This has led to improvements in the rate at which students make progress in their learning. Some teaching is outstanding. For example, in a Year 10 modern foreign language lesson an enthusiastic and energetic teacher effectively motivated students by lively presentation techniques and well-paced and appropriately challenging activities. A good Year 7 mathematics lesson enabled students to make good progress by ensuring that all the students worked independently on activities suited to their level of understanding. Their confidence was such that they were able to extend their own learning through choosing additional problem-solving activities. The school knows that it still has work to do to ensure that teaching across the school is consistently at the level of the best. Heads of faculties and subject leaders have a key role to play in securing this. The school is also aware that it has not yet explored students' and parents' concerns about recent changes to the type of homework set and the timescales for completing it, to ensure homework is providing the maximum learning opportunities for students.

The good curriculum is the result of the school successfully broadening provision to meet more effectively the needs of students. Students' choice at Key Stage 4 has been extended as a result of specialist school status, through the addition of vocational options and the opportunity to follow extra GCSE subjects from an interesting range offered in the school's out-of-hours sessions at the end of the school day. The out-of-hours sessions also enrich students' learning and personal development through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are highly valued by the students. Students' preparation for their future lives is good and strengthened by valuable opportunities to deepen their international understanding, which are promoted particularly well through the school's modern foreign languages specialism.

The headteacher and senior leaders are ambitious for the students. A period of rapid and challenging change, in the context of a number of changes in the teaching staff, is being managed well. Effective processes for evaluating how well the school is doing mean that there is an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. The school knows that the effectiveness of middle leaders, including heads of faculty, subject leaders and heads of year, is central to building on recent progress. Good practice already exists, for example, in the leadership of English and modern foreign languages, and the school correctly identifies securing the best practice across all middle leadership as an area for improvement. The governing body has a good understanding of its role and provides effective support and challenge to the leaders of the school. The leaders are acutely aware of the need to sustain recent improvements. The school knows what it wants and needs to do to improve and it has good capacity to do so.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics by ensuring that lesson activities consistently challenge all learners in all year groups.
- Secure high quality middle leadership for all subjects, with a sharp focus on ensuring all teaching is of the quality of the best in the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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, 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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

May 2008 Dear Students Inspection of Penrice Community College, St Austell PL25 3NR Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to my colleague and I during our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views about your work and your school. It is our judgement that your school is good. It is very committed to doing the very best for all of you and one of its strengths is the good support it gives you through the system of tutors and heads of year. We are particularly pleased that those of you who need extra support have access to an excellent range of help. It is clear that you enjoy school. You make a good contribution to the school community and show a willingness to accept responsibility through, for example, the work of the school council, supporting each other through being trained mentors, working as junior sports leaders and supporting primary school pupils learning modern foreign languages. We are very pleased that your behaviour has improved and is now good. There have also been improvements in your attendance, which is now good, and a significant drop in the number of you arriving late for school. Congratulations on these improvements. I am sure you appreciate the importance of good behaviour and attendance in helping you to do well at school and that you will make every effort to keep up these improvements. You told us that you feel safe in school and that you have adults to turn to if you need help. The school's examination results in 2007 showed that students had made satisfactory progress. The school is working very hard to make sure that you do better. As a result of their efforts, teaching is now good overall and there is regular and careful checking of how well you are doing. You are now making good progress and reaching above-average standards overall, but the school is particularly aware of the need to improve your work in mathematics. Your headteacher is good and he is well supported by some able leaders. There have been a lot of changes and improvements to your school. We have asked the school to make sure that all the leaders of subjects keep helping you to improve, particularly by working to make all teaching as good as the best in the school. We wish you all the very best for the future. Valerie Pearson Her Majesty's Inspector