

Penryn College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112044
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325516
Inspection date	12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Frater HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	980
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Henry Preston
Headteacher	Marie Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2005
School address	Poltisko Road Penryn TR10 8PZ
Telephone number	01326 372379
Fax number	01326 373194

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Introduction

- The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues:
- students' achievement and standards
- the impact of teaching on students' progress, particularly the most and least able students
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in meeting the needs of all students.

Evidence was gathered from data on students' progress, observations of lessons and students' work, discussions with students, staff and governors, and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the college's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Penryn College is similar in size to most secondary schools. There are more boys than girls and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is average. Very few students come from minority ethnic groups. Over a quarter of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average, and a high proportion of these have a statement of special educational needs. The main areas of difficulty are moderate learning; behavioural, emotional and social; specific learning (dyslexia); and speech, language and communication. An Area Resource Base providing for 15 students with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities, drawn from a wide geographical area, is integral to the college. While attainment on entry is below average overall, the number of more able students joining the college has increased since the last inspection. The number of students who join or leave the college at times other than at the start of Year 7 is in line with most schools. The college has had specialist status in sport since 1998, in applied learning since 2006, and has been a Leading Edge College since 2004. It provides a wide range of outdoor education. It has achieved extensive accreditation, including Sports Mark Gold, Investor in People, Quality in Study Support, Arts Mark Gold, Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark, Healthy School Award, Investor in Work Related and Enterprise Education, National Enterprise Specialist Hub School for Sport, Impact and Innovation Award (Leading Edge), and School Sports Partnership Mark. The college was Cornwall's 'Building Schools for the Future' pathfinder and raised an additional £1.4 million to provide community sports facilities. It moved into its new building in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The overall effectiveness of Penryn College remains outstanding because students' achievement is outstanding. The senior leadership team and staff know the students and their needs very well. They provide an extensive curriculum, enhanced by specialist provision and extended services, including support for basic skills, to meet the needs of all students. As a result, students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress from their starting points. Standards at GCSE have risen in the past three years. The number of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national average in 2008. This exceeded the college's challenging targets. All students are entered for a qualification in physical education and sport. The specialist target in sport was not met in the single GCSE, but all students who took the applied course passed at A* to C grades. The standard of work produced by current students across the school continues to rise and is now above average overall. This is due to detailed monitoring and intervention by the senior and subject leadership teams.

Students' achievement is supported by their outstanding personal development and well-being. Due to the exceptional range of opportunities students have to contribute to decisions made in the college and to develop leadership skills, for example in sport, performing arts, outdoor education and the college council, they grow in confidence and self-esteem. They develop positive attitudes to learning and aspire to further and higher education. A parent comments, 'Under the care and guidance of the staff, both my girls have blossomed into happy and confident children.' A few parents expressed concern about behaviour in one year group. It is being addressed appropriately. Students lead an anti-bullying support group and this, together with all-age tutor groups and staff vigilance, is helping to address the small number of bullying incidents. Students with behavioural difficulties learn to manage their behaviour well. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is good. Students, including those from minority ethnic groups, say they feel safe and that they get on well together and with the teachers because of the college's 'team spirit'.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through assemblies and the curriculum, students learn to value themselves and people of other faiths and cultures. They have a growing awareness of national and global issues. They reflect on moral issues in social education and develop good social skills in team events. Through physical education and other subjects, students develop an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy, including healthy eating. Most students attend extra-curricular activities and enjoy outdoor education. They enjoy school immensely and this is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. Their contribution to the college, as prefects and mentors to younger students, and to the local community, for example as junior sports and arts leaders during school holidays, is outstanding. The leadership programmes, and the applied and vocational courses and enterprise activities, develop workplace skills and prepare students exceptionally well for their future economic well-being.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, although it remains good overall. The college is aware that further work is needed to secure outstanding progress in all lessons. Teaching is becoming more consistent through rigorous procedures for monitoring lessons, performance management and continuing professional development. Most lessons lead students through a well-planned sequence of tasks to achieve appropriately challenging learning objectives. Good use of interactive whiteboards and practical tasks to make links to

the 'real world' were seen in English and science lessons. In music and physical education, and vocational studies where students gave presentations on topics such as alcoholism, students were seen to assess their own and each other's work and this resulted in rapid progress. Improved use of targets is raising standards in mathematics. In a few lessons, however, individual targets are not used to challenge all students, particularly the more able, to reach higher standards. The pace of learning in these lessons is often limited because students are not all engaged in finding out for themselves, for example through collaborative investigation or problem solving.

The curriculum is exemplary in the way that it engages all students and promotes their outstanding achievement and personal development. It is innovative, flexible and constantly reviewed and adapted by the senior leadership team, to meet the full range of students' academic and personal needs. Specialist provision underpins the work of the college. Sport and applied learning raise students' aspirations successfully by providing clear progression pathways into further education. The curriculum is enhanced by a programme of outdoor education which includes sailing and orienteering, and by an extensive range of study support provided in part through funding for extended services. Specialist status in sport provides exceptional facilities and opportunities to participate both within and outside of the school day, including at weekends. Students say 'the facilities are amazing' and 'brilliant'. Extra-curricular provision extends beyond sport. As a parent comments, 'The school offers a great range of extra-curricular activities and it appears to be "buzzing" after normal school hours.'

The care, guidance and support the college provides are outstanding. The level of detail in identifying, and monitoring progress in, each student's personal and academic needs is exceptional. It is appreciated by the students who say the teachers are 'improving the quality of our lives'. Parents comment: 'There is a very caring family feel to the school' and 'I feel my children are treated as individuals which is very important'. The college meets all statutory requirements for the care and safeguarding of students. It works exceptionally well with a range of external partners, including health and social services, community police, and other schools and colleges, to meet their personal, social, emotional and academic needs. Students praise the transition arrangements from primary school, the college's reward system and the support of mentors. They know their target levels and grades, and in most lessons they are given good guidance on how to reach them. The college is developing a new system for marking students' work to ensure guidance is consistently effective. Students with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities within the area resource base integrate well in the college, attending some mainstream lessons and extra-curricular activities. They make good progress towards the targets in their statements of special educational needs, but the targets in their individual education plans are not specific enough to promote higher standards of work.

The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding because it meets the full range of students' needs and secures their outstanding achievement. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the college. Comments such as 'The managers are very committed to what they do and their enthusiasm for their students is endless' are typical. The inspirational headteacher and her dedicated and innovative senior leadership team promote leadership skills very successfully across the college, including students' leadership skills. As a result, all leaders are motivated to bring about further improvement. Senior and middle leaders are rigorous in setting challenging targets, evaluating progress towards them, and identifying appropriate priorities for development, such as improving the quality of teaching and learning. In taking effective action, for example in raising the achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, they promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination. The leadership team understands the needs of the community in depth. Through extended services and specialist

facilities, they engage students and their families in learning, and raise their aspirations. Community use of the college is excellent and this, together with an emphasis on developing students' respect for diversity, promotes community cohesion exceptionally well. The college resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve outstanding value for money.

Improvements since the last inspection include the continuing rise in standards and quality of teaching and learning, together with the replacement of previous sub-standard accommodation. The rise in standards was achieved during the very successful transition of the college from the old to the new building. A parent notes, 'The move into the new building appeared seamless with minimum disruption.' Governors' support for the leadership team is exemplary. Governors took responsibility for the new building, enabling senior leaders to focus on students' achievement and standards. Students and staff were consulted at each stage and this has resulted in an excellent environment for learning. The senior leadership team is capitalising on the new facilities in engaging the whole college in an inspirational vision of independent learning for the 21st century. Given their track record, and the distributed leadership, they have an outstanding capacity to bring about further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further, particularly for more able students, by ensuring all teachers match their lessons to the range of students' challenging targets and engage them in a more investigative and collaborative approach to learning.
- Raise standards in the Area Resource Base by setting measurable academic targets and by using the targets to inform lessons.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

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

13 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Penryn College, Penryn TR10 8PZ

Thank you for giving my colleague and me such a friendly welcome when we inspected your college. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work. You and your parents told us your college is outstanding, and we agree. The following are some of the things we found out:

- You make outstanding progress in your work and reach above average standards.
- Your personal development and well-being are excellent because the staff know you very well and provide exemplary care, guidance and support for you.
- You enjoy the very wide range of clubs and activities the college provides.
- You develop positive attitudes to learning and good skills to help you in your future education and work.
- Your behaviour is good, and you are helping to stamp out bullying.
- You know how to keep safe and healthy and those of you who are sports leaders help your community to keep healthy too.
- Your college provides you with an extensive curriculum that includes outdoor education and study support and enables all of you to achieve very well.
- Your headteacher and the leadership team are enthusiastic about giving you the best possible education, and they monitor your progress carefully.

Even outstanding schools can improve further. To support the improvements the leaders and managers have already identified as priorities, we have asked them to:

- raise standards further, particularly for those of you who are capable of reaching the highest levels and grades, by making sure all your lessons help you to reach your targets and involve you in independent thinking and learning activities, such as investigation or problem solving
- set those of you in the Area Resource Base more specific targets to help you to improve your work

You can help by encouraging all students to be considerate of others and by monitoring your own progress towards your targets. We are sure you will make the most of your 'brilliant' new facilities and wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector