

# Sir John Hunt Community Sports College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113533
<b>Local Authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	325838
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nick Green HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	683
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vernon Pinches
<b>Headteacher</b>	Wendy Brett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 October 2005
<b>School address</b>	Lancaster Gardens Whitleigh Plymouth PL5 4AA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 201020
<b>Fax number</b>	01752 201102

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than the average secondary school. The great majority of students are of White British heritage and many come from predominantly disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals and the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. Students' attainment on entry to the school varies between below and well below average. The school is one of the partners of the Woodview Learning Community and shares a site with a special school, a primary school and a children's centre. A federated governing body is responsible for all this provision. The school holds numerous awards including School Achievement Award, International School Award, Healthy Schools Award and Sportsmark. It moved into a new school building this term.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Sir John Hunt is a good and improving school. Several features are outstanding. Effective steps have been taken since the last inspection to raise standards from a very low base. In Year 9 and Year 11 last year, standards were still below average. However, this represented good progress for students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, given their starting points when they joined the school. Most students exceeded the challenging targets they had been set. Girls made less progress than boys, though the examination results of girls in Year 11 were depressed because of the personal circumstances of several students, which the school had no control over. In physical education (PE), students in Year 11 achieved far better than expected in comparison with pupils in similar circumstances nationally. Students' current standards and progress across subjects are on track to rise further. The school's steady improvement and good capacity to improve further owe a lot to the excellent leadership and management of the principal, the effective senior leadership team and the improving capability of middle managers. These leaders' and managers' clear vision and direction set high expectations for staff and students.

Underpinning the improving performance of the school is the outstanding care, guidance and support provided for students. An exemplary feature of this is the way the school works in partnership with others to promote students' well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which are good. Pastoral support is closely matched to individual needs, particularly for the most vulnerable students. Students have very positive relationships with their peers and adults both in and outside of the school. Their behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. Students show a good understanding of the diversity of their local and the British community as well other international cultures.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Most lessons are planned carefully and taught using a range of effective methods. Assessment information is generally used well to tailor learning to pupils' individual needs. However, it is not always used sufficiently well to structure teaching and learning to increase students' progress. Additionally, students that are more able are at times not amply challenged to ensure they achieve as well as they could. Well chosen professional development activities are being used to improve the quality of teaching, and their impact is clearly contributing to the better progress currently being made by students.

Students benefit from the well devised curriculum that is constantly under review to ensure it meets all students' needs. In the upper school, students are given a wide choice of options including good vocational pathways. The school is planning to make the lower school curriculum more creative and competency based. High proportions of students undertake and achieve well in PE. The variety of extra-curricular activities and level of student participation in them are good. The effective promotion of community cohesion, diversity and equality exemplifies the inclusive nature of the school. Thorough and accurate self-evaluation clearly identifies the school's strengths and priorities for development.

Parents' support for the school is overwhelmingly positive. They say staff are truly dedicated and very supportive and caring. Parents say any concerns they have are dealt with effectively and promptly because staff are approachable; as a result, their children enjoy school considerably. This high level of satisfaction is summed up by one parent's comment that 'I am extremely pleased with my son going to Sir John Hunt as he is growing into a confident and high achieving pupil.'

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise students' achievement and standards, particularly that of girls, by ensuring teaching is challenging for all students, especially the more able.
- Ensure that all teachers make full use of students' attainment and progress data to ensure their teaching and the work they set is suitably matched to students' individual needs.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards have been exceptionally low at the end of Year 9 for some years, though they have been rising steadily. Last academic year, they rose to below average as more students attained the higher levels in the national tests. Given the starting points of Year 9 students when they joined the school, their progress and achievement were good. Students made better progress in English than in science and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 11 have followed a similar trend and they, too, have risen significantly, particularly the percentage of students gaining five A\* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. While standards at the end of the last academic year were still below average, in relation to Year 11 students' attainment when they entered the school, their progress and achievement were good. In physical education, virtually all students gained a grade C or above, which far exceeded the proportion predicted to do so. In both Years 9 and 11, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made good progress. There was little difference in the progress made by girls and boys in Year 9, though in Year 11 girls did not make such good progress as boys. The dip in girls' achievement last year was partly accounted for by contextual factors, such as illness at assessment time. No group of students significantly underperformed in Year 11.

Year 9 and Year 11 students' current standards and levels of progress indicate they are on track to achieve equally well or better results by the end of this academic year. These rising standards are due to improvements in students' engagement in learning and the effective support and academic guidance they receive.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students enjoy school and this is clearly reflected in their positive attitudes to learning, their outstanding behaviour in lessons and around the school, and their excellent relationships with staff. It is also shown by their satisfactory attendance that has improved over the last three years; the number of students persistently absent has significantly reduced in this time. Parents' views reflect students' enjoyment of their education, as one parent wrote to inspectors, 'My child loves the school and I am very happy with my daughter's progress'. Another commented that their child 'won't miss school even for medical appointments, he enjoys it that much!' Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as exhibited by their confident and thoughtful responses in class, their clear understanding of right and wrong, and their considerate attitudes towards each other and adults. Students say they feel safe in school and they adopt safe practices in practical lessons and around the school. There is little racial intolerance and bullying is rare. Membership of the school council, the role of lead learners and opportunities to become junior sports leaders enable many students to develop responsibility and leadership skills. The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Students have a very well developed understanding of all aspects of what it means to live

healthily. They participate in an extensive amount of sport and physical exercise and show clear awareness of the need for a healthy diet.

Students exhibit a strong sense of belonging to the school. They take good advantage of the many opportunities for participating in decision making or consultation within the school. They contribute well to a range of local community events through which they establish positive relationships with younger children and older members of the community. Skills developed by students through work-based learning are good, which prepares them well for their future economic well-being. Their improving levels of numeracy and literacy and skills of independent learning contribute to this satisfactorily.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good subject knowledge of teachers enables them to plan well structured lessons with clear learning objectives. Good relationships between staff and students underpin teaching, and this is a strength of classroom practice. One parent wrote, 'As parents, we are very impressed at how friendly and supportive teachers are.' Teachers manage their classes well and use information and communication technology (ICT) successfully to motivate students. Consequently, students respond positively to this effective teaching, behave in an exemplary way in lessons and are engaged in their learning. A good range of teaching methods is used by the majority of teachers. Their explanations, instructions and questioning are effective in developing and consolidating students' understanding. Resources are chosen and used well. The teaching of lower ability groups is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. In these lessons, teachers work effectively with learning support assistants to meet students' individual needs. However, students that are more able are at times not challenged sufficiently to ensure they achieve as well as they could.

Marking and feedback are effective in making students aware of how well they are doing in most lessons. The best regularly reviews students' work and provides them with helpful suggestions for improvement. Students are provided with good information about their progress and attainment against well understood targets. Most teachers use it to tailor learning effectively to pupils' individual needs. However, in a significant minority of lessons seen, this data was not being used sufficiently to structure teaching and learning and increase the rate of students' progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The needs of all students are met well by the broad and balanced curriculum in Years 10 and 11 that is reviewed and revised regularly. The range of vocational courses available is good; students enjoy the experiences provided by alternative curriculum provision and opportunities for work-related learning. The school's specialist sports status has a significant beneficial impact on the curriculum. As a result, students now receive well above the statutory requirement of curriculum time for PE and all students undertake BTEC PE courses, in which they achieve very well. The curriculum contributes to students' personal development and well-being highly successfully; students praised the school's commitment to promoting their health and fitness. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 meets statutory requirements well. The school is aware that it

would benefit from more variety and more opportunities for students to develop their creativity and key competences; it plans to address this in the near future.

A good variety of extra-curricular activities and subject-related clubs are available to students, including numerous sporting activities, dance, drama, ICT and model making. The high level of students' participation in them makes an excellent contribution to their enjoyment and achievement. Individual students who would benefit most are encouraged to attend subject support sessions. Several events are provided for students who are gifted and talented at sport. A range of visits, including a residential experience, enrich students' development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, support and inclusion of students are a major strength of the school. The pastoral staff are highly committed and work effectively as a team to safeguard the welfare of all students and help them achieve. Students know to whom they should turn when they have a problem and trust these adults to deal sensitively with their difficulties. The support and care provided for vulnerable students and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. Working highly effectively with external agencies from the local community, the school meets the needs of these students very well. Parents value the caring and supportive ethos of the school which underpins all students' personal development and well-being. As one parent commented, 'The school is very encouraging to pupils whatever their talents.'

Good induction arrangements are in place to ensure students' smooth transition from primary school. High quality advice is provided on examination subject choices and career progression when they leave school. Effective academic guidance gives students a full understanding of their current attainment and sets them challenging targets. Students' progress is regularly tracked to identify those who need additional support and guidance, which is given to these students at an early stage. This contributes well to their rising standards and the good progress they make. The effective action taken by the school to reduce the absence rate has also had a beneficial impact on students' achievements.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The principal's clear vision, strong direction and effective communication underpin the progress the school has made since the last inspection. She has analysed the school's performance accurately and implemented strategies that have been successful in raising the quality of care and education. In conjunction with the effective senior leadership team and the growing strength of middle managers, she has set high expectations and motivated staff. This is reflected in the drive and commitment to improve the school's performance that is shared by all staff. As a result, students' standards have risen and aspects of their personal development, particularly their behaviour and attitudes to learning, have improved.

Lessons are monitored and evaluated thoroughly to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Effective professional development activities are enabling staff to share good practice and enhance their teaching. The school has used increasingly challenging targets, including those for its specialist subject and for attendance, to help raise standards. Performance data are used very well to identify those who are underachieving and to prompt intervention to improve their

performance. The school's effective self-evaluation takes good account of a wide range of views that are used well to inform improvement planning.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. It has a clear understanding of what is required to promote strong cohesion in the school community and with local communities. A range of activities, including a cultural awareness day and a drama project with a Roman Catholic primary school, have been effectively used to do this. Visitors to the school and links with schools in other countries are employed very well to develop students' understanding of the UK and global communities. One successful example was a Chinese teacher's presentations to students about Chinese culture prior to the Beijing Olympics. These activities have helped students develop an understanding of others' lives and an appreciation of diversity.

The school's leaders and managers promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination effectively. They have created an ethos of inclusion that has enabled all students to progress, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's resources, particularly its staff, are deployed well. Accommodation and facilities have improved significantly since the last inspection, the transition to the new school building being managed extremely successfully. The new federated governing body discharges its responsibilities well and holds the school's leaders and managers suitably to account for the school's performance while providing valuable support.



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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?	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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

15 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir John Hunt Community Sports College, Plymouth PL5 4AA

Thank you for the help you provided the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting members of year groups and we learned a great deal from our discussions with many of you in lessons and around the school.

Your school is good and has outstanding features. It is improving steadily and standards have been rising over recent years. Last year, even though standards were still below average, students made good progress from the time they entered the school, including those who had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the girls did not make such good progress as the boys. In PE, all groups of students achieved very well. Currently, you are making as good, if not better, progress and are on track to attain higher standards. Teaching and learning are good. Your teachers plan well and use effective strategies to help you learn. However, the more able students are not always challenged fully in lessons. In addition, information on how well you are doing is not always used sufficiently to structure lessons to increase the progress you make.

Your personal development and well-being are good. You enjoy school, feel safe, demonstrate positive attitudes and your behaviour is outstanding. You take on responsibility well and the way you contribute to the community is good. The quality of the care, guidance and support you receive is outstanding. The way the school works with others to do this is excellent. The curriculum you receive meets your needs and capabilities well. The school's sport's college specialist status and the variety of extra-curricular activities you participate in have a very beneficial impact on your enjoyment and achievement.

The clear vision, strong direction, and effective leadership and management of the principal and senior teachers are driving the school's improvement. In order to improve further, we have asked them to raise standards, particularly of girls and the most able students, by making teaching and learning more challenging. We have also asked that all teachers make full use of assessment information to ensure their teaching and the work they set you is suitably matched to your individual needs. You can really help by striving to do your very best in tests and examinations.

Best wishes with your studies.

Nick Green

Her Majesty's Inspector