

# Inspection of Plympton Academy

Moorland Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 2RS

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Inspection dates: 10–11 March 2020

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are tolerant and get along well with each other. Newcomers to the school feel welcomed and soon settle. Pupils say they feel safe. They told us that while bullying does not happen very often, there is always someone they can turn to for help should they need it. Pupils behave well in school. They can usually learn without disruption.

Leaders have recently developed an approach to teaching that means pupils know what to expect in their lessons. They say they can get on with their work. However, teaching does not always help pupils to remember important knowledge the school wants them to learn. Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough and this is limiting what they achieve.

The school provides a wealth of activities to develop pupils' skills and talents beyond the classroom. Pupils enjoy being creative and working together. They particularly enjoy eco club, dance company, school of rock and horrible histories clubs. Pupils say these opportunities help them when thinking about what they may want to do in the future.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Senior leaders have helped curriculum leaders to improve their plans. Leaders have provided time so that teachers can work together to develop their subjects. This is helping to improve the quality of the school's curriculum.

Many subjects have a curriculum plan that is well sequenced, such as in mathematics. Where the curriculum is also taught well, pupils achieve well. However, in science, the curriculum is not as well planned, and pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. In English, the curriculum plan for younger pupils lacks ambition. The key stage 3 curriculum lacks breadth in places, such as in modern foreign languages.

Leaders expect teaching to be carefully structured. They have developed activities intended to help pupils to know and remember more. Pupils learn in a purposeful environment. However, some pupils find it difficult to recall their learning. They do not consistently remember what they have been taught. For example, pupils in science are not able to recall important scientific knowledge. Teaching is not always making knowledge stick. In some cases, pupils are expected to use skills without the depth of knowledge required for them to do this successfully. For example, sometimes pupils in history write superficially about historical evidence.

The sixth-form curriculum lacks ambition for all students. While they can write detailed answers that reflect their teachers' guidance, students do not develop the depth of knowledge and understanding to take things further. Across the school,

pupils lack confidence when talking about the topics they study. Pupils say they rarely have the opportunity to discuss what they know.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with teachers in subjects where pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have not achieved as well. However, staff do not always make good use of the information about pupils with SEND that leaders provide them with. This means that sometimes pupils with SEND are not able to start or complete work. The curriculum does not always support pupils with SEND as well as it should.

Most pupils come to school regularly. However, disadvantaged pupils attend less frequently. One third of disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent in 2018–19. Leaders have not had much success in encouraging disadvantaged pupils to attend school more often. Pupils who do not attend school regularly miss important work. This means they do not achieve as well as others. They rarely move on to the sixth form. The attendance of pupils with SEND, however, is improving.

The school helps pupils to learn about relationships, keeping fit and healthy and the dangers of drugs misuse. Pupils were not, however, as clear about the rule of law or what extreme views are. Pupils said their knowledge depended on how their tutor delivered the programme. The school's 'week 10' programme enables pupils to develop greater understanding of a range of topics, such as human rights, or to gain deeper experience of performing arts. The school provides effective careers advice that pupils say is very useful. Students in the sixth form complete appropriate work experience. They feel well supported by staff when making plans for the future.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils say they feel safe. They feel well looked after by pastoral staff in the school. Staff and parents agree that the school is a safe place for pupils.

Safeguarding leaders have put robust systems in place. Staff know what to look for and report any concerns quickly. The safeguarding team uses reports from staff well to spot potential concerns and to take appropriate action.

The team makes good use of external agencies. Staff are well aware of the risks to pupils when they are not in school. The safeguarding team makes sure that the right services are put in place for children who are in need.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school's strategies for promoting good attendance by all groups of pupils are not working well enough. In particular, absence and persistent absence are far too high for disadvantaged pupils. This means that these pupils often miss vital

learning that they never catch up on. The school should review its strategies and work closely with families to enable them to understand the importance of regular attendance.

- The structure and implementation of the curriculum are not helping pupils to know more and remember more across the whole range of subjects they study. Leaders should ensure that the school's approach to planning and teaching has a greater impact on pupils' progression towards ambitious curriculum goals.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers make good use of the information they are provided with to support pupils with SEND. This means these pupils do not do as well as they could. Leaders should make sure appropriate strategies are employed by teachers so that pupils with SEND achieve well.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

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|---|--|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 136556   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Plymouth   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10111569   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Secondary comprehensive  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 844  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 100  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>                    | Sue Dann   |
| <b>Principal</b>                                  | Lisa Boorman   |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.plympton.academy">www.plympton.academy</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 13 January 2016  |

## Information about this school

- At the time of its last inspection, Plympton Academy was known as Ridgeway School.
- The school is currently experiencing a complete rebuild. This is due for completion in September 2020.
- The school has used alternative provision at ACE Academy and City College Plymouth - Piquet Barracks.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the chair of the governing board (who is also chair of the trust) and governors. We also met with the principal, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and the SENCo.
- We undertook deep dives in English, history, mathematics and science. We visited lessons, met with staff, looked at pupils' work, talked with pupils, interviewed curriculum leaders and examined documentation.
- We met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead. We talked with a range of staff about safeguarding training and examined documentation and school records.
- We spoke with pupils to discuss their views about the school. We considered 75 responses to the pupil survey, 66 responses to the staff survey and 104 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and a parent letter.

## Inspection team

Tracey Reynolds, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

Ray Hennessy

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Lovett

Ofsted Inspector

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