

Inspection of Plympton Academy

Moorland Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 2RS

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Boorman. This school is part of The Thinking Skills Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Stuart Gardner, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gerard Newman.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy their learning and have positive attitudes towards school. The school has recently raised its expectations of pupils' conduct. Most pupils now live up to these. They follow routines well and behave well in lessons. Low-level disruption is not tolerated. As a result, the school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils are safe.

The school promotes equality and diversity well. For example, it recognises global days that champion the rights of groups protected in law. Sixth-form student leaders make an important and active contribution to the school's work in this area. Most relationships between pupils reflect the school's expectations of respectful and tolerant behaviour. Any discriminatory language is quickly challenged by the school and not allowed to spread.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Some pupils participate in the performing arts, such as musicals, dance and choir. Other pupils enjoy sport and look forward to the annual 'sports personality' awards, for instance. Pupils develop their cooperation skills on their residential trip to the coast when they join the school. The school removes any barriers to ensure that pupils can take part in these opportunities.

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

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' achievement and made improvements to the curriculum. However, pupils, including sixth-form students, do not achieve well enough. In many subjects, they do not gain sufficient depth in their knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils are not always well prepared for their future learning and next steps in life.

Pupils now follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. Sixth-form study programmes are tailored to students' needs and aspirations. In each subject, the school has ordered learning so that pupils can build on what they already know and can do. However, teaching does not check pupils' understanding well enough. It does not correct pupils' misconceptions quickly enough, nor address gaps in their learning in a timely way.

Although the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are increasingly met, these pupils do not learn the curriculum consistently well. The school has recently strengthened its work to identify pupils' needs more accurately. Teachers typically use information about pupils with SEND to adapt the curriculum suitably. These improvements are beginning to have a positive impact, but there is further work to ensure all pupils with SEND are successful.

Pupils who struggle to read do not get the right support. The books they read do not improve their reading fluency and confidence. Consequently, some pupils do not

have a strong foundation in reading. This impedes their learning across the wider curriculum.

Some pupils, including sixth-form students, do not attend school regularly enough. They often have gaps in their learning as a result. The school is determined to understand the causes of pupils' absence and provide appropriate support. It has helped raise some pupils' attendance, but there is more work to do.

Pupils follow a suitable personal, social and health education programme. They learn about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe online, for example. The school adapts the programme according to local contextual information. For instance, pupils develop their understanding of what constitutes harmful sexual behaviour. This helps them know how to keep themselves and others safe.

Pupils develop their understanding of active citizenship. They learn about democracy through participating in local youth parliament elections, for example. Some pupils are representatives for their tutor groups or sit on the school council. Sixth-form students develop their leadership skills by holding positions such as communications lead.

Pupils, including sixth-form students, receive useful careers education, information, advice and guidance. This helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps. Pupils learn about the world of work by undertaking work experience and attending an annual careers fair.

The school has strengthened its work to engage with parents and listen to pupils' views. Most pupils feel comfortable sharing concerns with a member of staff. However, some pupils and parents lack some confidence in the school to tackle bullying, for instance.

Trustees and local governors ensure that statutory duties are fulfilled. School and trust leaders have rightly focused on making improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive. They have used professional development to make improvements to the quality of implementation of the curriculum. However, further work is required to secure a good quality of education for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In many subjects, assessment is not used effectively. As a result, pupils have gaps in their knowledge and teaching does not consolidate their depth of

understanding. The school and trust should ensure that teaching checks pupils' knowledge effectively and remedies gaps in their learning.

- There is not an effective programme for pupils who need help to improve their reading fluency. This hinders their learning across the curriculum. The school and trust should ensure that there is a rigorous and sequential approach to reading, which develops pupils' fluency and confidence.
- Some pupils' rates of absence remain persistently high. The school and trust must maintain their sharp focus on reducing rates of absence and further understand causes of absence. They must continue to devise, and persist with, effective strategies that secure sustained improvement in pupils' attendance.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136556
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10297978
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,152
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
CEO	Stuart Gardner
Chair of trust	Gerard Newman
Principal	Lisa Boorman
Website	www.plympton.academy
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Thinking Skills Academy Trust.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, art and design and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal and members of the school's senior leadership team, trust leaders, and trustees and local governors, including the chair of the board of trustees.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to the online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

James Oldham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
David New	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Butler	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Barnes	Ofsted Inspector

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