

Inspection of a good school: The Portsmouth Academy

St Mary's Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO1 5PF

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 April 2022

Outcome

The Portsmouth Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at The Portsmouth Academy feel safe and well cared for. They say that staff do not tolerate bullying. Any instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and efficiently. There is someone to talk to should the need arise. Expectations are understood, but pupils say they are not always applied consistently. Respect is a recent focus for the school. The school was awarded the 'Bronze Rights Respecting School Award' and is now working towards the silver award.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are particularly strong. Teachers are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects, which engages and motivates pupils. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. New courses have been introduced to broaden the curriculum offer.

Extra-curricular activities are extensive and well attended by pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. The school offers a successful Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme. Pupils are actively involved in voluntary service in the community. Pupils support each other very well in school.

The provision for careers is particularly strong. The school has exceptional links with industry and commerce. External speakers regularly visit the school to talk about career opportunities. There are productive links with Portsmouth University, and these have been used well to promote the study of languages.

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

The curriculum is well designed and well considered. The intention of the curriculum is to transform the life chances of pupils in the school. The ambition, breadth and content of the curriculum contribute to this intention. Curriculum development is purposeful and ongoing. Leaders agree that, in a very few subjects, intent and implementation are not yet fully embedded.

The English Baccalaureate sits at the heart of the curriculum, with an increasing number of pupils studying a language at GCSE. Core subjects are well supported and improvements in science are well underway. The school gives a high profile to the arts, including music, drama, dance, art and photography.

The curriculum is closely aligned to the national curriculum. It is suitably augmented to address the gaps caused by the pandemic. Cross-curricular links are appreciated but not yet fully exploited. Assessment is used to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge as well as to review the quality of the curriculum.

The school has strong links with primary schools in terms of the curriculum. These links have evolved to ensure that the curriculum builds well on the primary phase. There are growing links with post-16 providers. This ensures that pupils are better prepared for study in the next phase of their education.

There is considerable emphasis on literacy, and subject-specific vocabulary is highlighted in all subjects. Reading ages are regularly assessed. The school operates a successful accelerated reading programme for those who fall behind.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and achieve well because of their personalised programmes. Disadvantaged pupils are well known. Teachers give them priority when marking and providing feedback. Nonetheless, gaps exist, and the school is working hard to see where their learning might be additionally supported.

The school has recently revised the behaviour policy, focusing on 'choice, chance and consequence'. The policy is still being embedded. Its introduction is timely, as the school wrestles with the impact of the pandemic and the need to re-establish behaviour norms. Leaders, staff and pupils say the behaviour of a very small minority of pupils continues to cause disruption to the education of others.

Regardless, disruptive and off-task behaviour were rarely seen during the time of inspection. Lessons were calm and orderly. Pupils were well behaved and respectful. Occasionally, this calm was punctuated with inappropriate language, which was acknowledged but sometimes unchallenged.

Pupils' attendance is in line with national averages. The school works particularly hard to ensure that pupils attend school to benefit from the education on offer. The school has taken action to reduce the numbers of exclusions. The school's focus on respect has seen a marked reduction in the number of inappropriate and unkind comments made by pupils.

Leaders are knowledgeable and well informed. They engage fully with staff. They work hard to take account of staff's pressures and workloads. Governors and trustees are committed and experienced. They regularly visit the school, and this allows them to have a better understanding of the school and the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority across the school. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Training is regular and robust. The school works hard to provide a safe environment in which pupils can learn. Pupils are aware of safeguarding risks to themselves. They receive age-appropriate instruction on issues around consent and sexual harassment.

The single central record is collated in line with statutory guidance. It is maintained to a very high standard and regularly checked by members of the trust as well as the governing board. Record-keeping is very thorough, and actions are robustly followed through. Safeguarding concerns and allegations are thoroughly investigated. Recruitment and selection processes adhere to safer recruitment practices.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum intent and implementation are not yet fully embedded securely across all subjects. This means that further work is needed to ensure that all subjects are as good as the best. Leaders should continue their work to share the very best practice that already exists. They should ensure that curriculum intent and implementation are securely embedded across the school.
- The behaviour of a very small minority of pupils does not live up to leaders' high expectations, and occasionally impacts on the learning of others. Pupils say that expectations are not always applied consistently. Leaders should continue their work to embed the behaviour policy. They should ensure that all pupils show respect and kindness towards others as actively promoted by the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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.

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

Unique reference number	139714
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10227017
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Victoria Ferguson
Principal	Rachel Grey
Website	www.theportsmouthacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Portsmouth Academy is an average-size secondary school. The academy opened in September 2013 and is sponsored by the Thinking Schools Academy Trust. The academy became co-educational in September 2017.
- Twelve pupils attend alternative provision at two registered education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, talked to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors held meetings with the senior leaders and subject leaders as well as staff and pupils. They looked at the single central record and reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures and practices.
- Inspectors reviewed school policies, curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. The lead inspector met with trust and board members.
- Inspectors considered 81 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and 60 additional written comments from parents. They looked at the school's own parent surveys as well as the survey returns completed by 72 staff and 174 pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ann Fearon

Ofsted Inspector

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