

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Plymouth College Junior School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

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| Full Name of the School | Plymouth College Junior School |
| DCSF Number | 879/6004 |
| Registered Charity Number | 1105544 |
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| Chairman of Governors | Mr David Luke |
| Age Range | 3 to 11 |
| Gender | Mixed |
| Inspection Dates | 12th to 15th November 2007 |

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Plymouth College Junior School is a preparatory school for 250 full time and 15 part time pupils, from 3 to 11 years of age. Of the full time pupils 134 are boys and 116 girls. The 15 part time pupils are in the Kindergarten and in addition there are a further 31 full-time pupils in the Kindergarten and Reception and 219 in Years 1 to 6. The school and the senior school are the responsibility of the Plymouth College Charitable Trust. Pupils generally come from Plymouth and the surrounding district. The majority go on to Plymouth College, but some move on to local selective maintained schools and a few to other schools.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1877 and over the years has merged with a number of other preparatory schools. Three years ago the Plymouth College schools merged with St Dunstan's Abbey School, a 3 to 18 girls school and the re-constituted junior school moved into new premises on part of the site of the former Royal Naval Hospital.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide a friendly and caring environment for all pupils, to encourage all pupils to achieve their full potential and to adopt high standards of courtesy and behaviour. High expectations are set with equal importance attached to academic studies, physical education and the arts. Entry into the Kindergarten is by informal assessment and pupils joining later are tested and interviewed. The pupils have a wide range of ability on entry, but pupils' average ability is above that of the national average. Seventeen pupils receive support for specific learning difficulties. There are no pupils at present in receipt of lessons for English as an additional language, but this support is available if it is needed. In general, if pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results will be above the average for all maintained primary schools.
- 1.4 Since the last inspection in October 2001, the school has undergone considerable change, having moved into new premises with improved facilities and with two changes of headmasters. The most recent change to the leadership of the school was just three weeks before the inspection with the appointment of an acting headmaster.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Plymouth College Junior School provides an all-round education of high quality that fulfils the aims of the school in challenging pupils with high expectations and providing opportunities for each child to fulfil their potential within a wide and balanced curriculum. The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development and enables them to acquire skills of literacy, speaking, listening and numeracy. The school prepares pupils very well for each stage of their education and for adult life. The quality of the educational experience both in timetabled lessons and in extra-curricular activity has been maintained since the last inspection.
- 2.2 In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is based on the six areas of learning and children progress effectively through the Stepping Stones, working towards the Early Learning Goals nationally recommended for children of that age. Across the rest of the school, the curriculum incorporates all the National Curriculum subjects and the timetable is constructed to allow sufficient teaching time in all subjects, so that pupils gain experience and develop in all areas of learning. In Year 5 Spanish is introduced as a second language. Drama is woven successfully into the English curriculum with role-play activities, performances in assembly and a variety of dramatic productions each year. The single lessons of English in Year 6, however, restrict the amount of work that can be covered in 40 minutes. Citizenship is positively reinforced through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. The curriculum is extended throughout the school by a wide variety of educational visits, including a residential French trip for Year 6 pupils, as well as through visitors and parents who come into the school to share their expertise and resources.
- 2.3 At the time of the inspection the information and communications technology (ICT) co-ordinator was absent. It is evident from the work undertaken in lessons, presented in books and on display that provision for the subject, through specialist teaching in the studio, is good. Pupils' educational experiences in the ICT studio contribute to their overall progress in many areas of learning. For example Year 6 pupils have created their own web pages demonstrating a proficient understanding of web language. All classrooms had evidence of ICT work during the inspection week, but not all classrooms have computers and they were rarely used. Work in ICT in subjects and classes across the school is variable in the amount of work undertaken and in the standards achieved.
- 2.4 Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities held at lunchtime and after school, which enhances pupils' lives and raises their self-esteem. The school has a significant number of sporting activities that take place in the well-equipped sports hall or in the grounds. These include netball, rounders and cricket, with some external instructors taking activities such as fencing and tennis. Whilst many clubs are sporting or musical, others reflect the diverse interests of the staff such as cookery, country dancing, sugar craft and military modelling. In total nearly 30 clubs are on offer each week and a significant number of pupils stay each evening to participate.
- 2.5 Induction into the Foundation Stage is effective and, to help prepare their children for school, parents are invited with their children to discuss their child's abilities and needs. As they move through the school, all pupils experience 'moving-up days', and staff liaise well with each other prior to the start of the new academic year. Parents of pupils in Year 4 meet with senior staff to discuss moving into Year 5, to prepare them for increased specialist teaching

and setting. Parents also meet individually with the headmaster to discuss their plans for their child's future schooling.

- 2.6 Curricular planning and policy documents for each subject are sufficiently detailed and provide continuity and progression in learning across the school. All pupils in the school have equal access to the curriculum and benefit from the very extensive range of activities provided. There is a well-planned provision for pupils with learning difficulties and for those who need extra support. Pupils attending learning support lessons follow, at their own pace, a broad framework of literacy teaching with specific additions to fit the recommendations and targets in their individual education plans, often compiled with advice from an educational psychologist.
- 2.7 Provision for gifted and talented pupils is made mainly by additional challenge within lessons, and some pupils are set extra work. Effectiveness of this provision varies from class to class and from subject to subject.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.9 When pupils come into the school the overall attainment is above average. Pupils achieve well at all ages in relation to their attainment on entry and by Year 6 standards are generally well above average.
- 2.10 Pupils are well grounded in skills, knowledge and understanding of the subjects they study, particularly in English, mathematics and science, where pupils develop a growing understanding. No significant difference is apparent between the relative achievement of boys and girls and pupils of different abilities. Higher attainers are challenged on occasions by rigorous questions or extension work, but there are times when the more able are not sufficiently challenged or their work sufficiently extended. Good achievement is to be seen by most pupils in most lessons at each stage and in particular by pupils with learning difficulties. The responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicate that the overwhelming majority of parents are happy with their children's progress.
- 2.11 The good standards identified by the previous inspection have been maintained and the school broadly meets its aims of requiring pupils to meet high expectations and for all pupils to achieve their full potential. Pupils do not sit national tests at the end of Year 2, but they do at the end of Year 6. Results in these tests over the last three years have been well above the average for all maintained primary schools, although there was a slight fall in the year that the schools moved and amalgamated. Pupils with learning difficulties do well in the tests and almost all of these pupils achieve at least the national average. The standards achieved in the tests reflect the standards of learning and achievement seen in most lessons. It is evident, however, that the standards that pupils achieve in their lessons and the quality of learning is closely related to the quality of teaching. When teaching is good, achievement is high. When teaching is less successful achievement is lower.
- 2.12 In most lessons, pupils make good progress in their learning. Pupils show good oral skills throughout the school and in English, they write with imagination and increasing effectiveness in different styles. In a lesson that engaged the concentration of Year 5 pupils, they studied the styles of newspapers and wrote with confidence in good journalistic style. In Year 6, pupils gain a good knowledge of Shakespeare, both in their lessons and in the school production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The work on Shakespeare provides some good extension opportunities for more able pupils in imaginative writing.

- 2.13 In mathematics, pupils develop good knowledge and use of mathematical language, which helps them understand how mathematics works. They demonstrate good mental mathematics skills at all ages and, by Year 6, show good skills in solving mathematical problems. In science, pupils are excited and enthusiastic learners. For example in a Year 6 lesson, pupils explored how heat travels through a vacuum. They enjoyed learning in the subject, concentrated with full attention throughout and developed good understanding of the topic. The use of good scientific language is evident and pupils understand the principles of fair testing from an early age.
- 2.14 Similarly in other subjects across the curriculum pupils achieve well in response to good teaching. There are examples of both high and average achievement in lessons at all ages, except in the Foundation Stage where achievement is usually high. At this early age pupils speak fluently, they have a good grasp of phonics and they quickly develop good number skills for their age. By the time they enter Year 1 almost all children achieve the Early Learning Goals nationally recommended for children of that age, and many have reached those levels earlier.
- 2.15 In the good lessons at all ages pupils have good opportunities to think for themselves, to investigate, to discover, argue cogently and extend their imagination. In pupils' books in history and geography for example, there are good examples of investigation and enquiry. In lessons pupils apply themselves very well and persevere with their tasks. Levels of concentration are frequently very high. Co-operative work in pairs and groups often supports pupils' learning.
- 2.16 Work on display about the school demonstrates that pupils develop good ICT skills in the studio. The use of the computer in classrooms and in work across subjects is more mixed. Some good examples of word processing are to be found in English books in some years. The work is not, however, consistently good across all subjects in all years.
- 2.17 Pupils are proud of their individual and team successes in sporting events. They have the opportunity to represent the school in football, cricket, hockey, rounders and rugby. They achieve well in these competitive sports locally, as well as excelling in fencing and in ballet. Standards in the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art examinations are good, with a large proportion of pupils achieving distinctions or merits. Pupils gain a great deal of confidence from taking part in arts activities, performing in the termly concerts and school productions. Last year pupils from Year 6 took part in the national Junior Mathematical Challenge. The pupils achieved well and three gained silver certificates and one a bronze certificate.
- 2.18 Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well in the lessons where they are extracted from their class for individual support. These lessons focus closely on the particular needs taken from careful diagnostic assessment and set out in the pupils' individual education plans. The provision in class lessons is more variable. In some lessons, teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of all pupils in their class, including those with learning difficulties, as well as the most able. When appropriate, pupils receive support from the class teacher or from support staff. At other times, the provision is less effective, but never less than satisfactory.
- 2.19 Most pupils move on to the senior school and, in their achievements and academic skills, are well prepared for that stage. Some pupils take tests to enter local maintained selective schools or other independent schools and the school has a good record for pupils taking these routes.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.20 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The pupils benefit from a wide range of appropriate opportunities, which help them to develop an understanding and appreciation of spiritual beliefs and moral codes of community and personal behaviour. Pupils mature and grow in personal and moral self-assurance in a friendly and caring environment, underpinned by the school's core values and Christian ethos. The good provision has been maintained since the last inspection.
- 2.21 The pupils' spiritual development is good. They respect themselves and each other, gain a sense of self-worth and are very self-confident. The pupils develop strong self-esteem and confidence from their relationships with adults in the school, not least teachers, with whom they have a warm relationship and are well respected. In subjects such as drama, music, PSHE and religious education together with assemblies held in the school chapel, they gain insights into the importance of spirituality in the world. Opportunities are given for reflection in assemblies, often on a moral theme. Pupils hold key events in the chapel that include Remembrance Day services, carol concerts and speech days.
- 2.22 The moral development of pupils is good. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed their support for the strong values they felt the school instilled in their children. Pupils learn from a very early age to distinguish right from wrong and they demonstrate very good behaviour around the school. They believe that rewards and sanctions are fair. The pupils understand the anti-bullying policy and know the high standards expected of them. In this they are greatly helped by the consistently calm and courteous manner of their teachers. The well-developed house point system encourages and rewards pupils for good work and progress. Thoughtful and helpful behaviour is rewarded with a Community Award given by the headmaster. In addition, pupils receive commendation certificates for work that is particularly good. Moral development is further supported by visitors who come to the school as part of the PSHE programme – these include a local preacher, a doctor and an officer from the local council, who discussed anti-bullying.
- 2.23 Pupils develop a strong sense of social responsibility. They relate very positively to each other and display a caring, sensitive and respectful attitude to one another, showing a high level of courtesy both inside and outside the classroom. Much of this is due to the school's encouragement to participate in the wide range of activities that foster team spirit and healthy competition. Pupils undertake responsibilities, such as prefects and librarians and Year 6 pupils regularly support their peers who might initially need to talk to someone other than an adult. Pupils who feel lonely or unhappy make use of the 'friendship bench' in the playground. All the pupils have pride in their school and some are elected to and serve on the school council. Through the school's charity activities, such as the collection for Harvest, Barnardos and Children in Need, pupils recognise their responsibilities to the wider community. In PSHE they learn about citizenship and various public institutions and services. Pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and most bring healthy snacks for break. Achievements of pupils are celebrated in the Friday assemblies; pupils are proud of the successes of their peers.
- 2.24 Through a wide range of interesting and informative studies and activities pupils gain good insight into their own and other cultures. Their own culture is celebrated in lessons, clubs and performances in music, art, drama and literature. As well as the regular dramatic productions, the school choir performs regularly, and displays of pupils' artwork are a significant feature of the school buildings. On occasions artists and performers visit the school. Pupils gain understanding of celebrations of the cultures of other people, for example Divali, Eid and creating Rangoli patterns. The religious education curriculum

includes the study of major world faiths. Trips to museums and theatres and visits by actors promote a greater understanding of the world at large. Recently an actor in the costume of a Roman soldier came to the school to talk about the life of a soldier in a Roman Legion. Pupils are encouraged to understand the cultures from other countries by taking part in a Spanish Day, an Africa Culture Workshop and being involved in Mexican and Brazilian music. Further understanding is gained from studying two languages in the upper years of the junior school.

- 2.25 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.26 Overall quality of teaching is good and this is an improvement to the teaching seen in the last inspection. The good teaching supports the school's aim of high academic standards and contributes effectively to pupils' achievement and progress, there is sufficient good teaching for pupils to make good progress overall as they move through the school. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are teaching. In a significant proportion of lessons there are shortcomings some of which were identified in the last inspection.
- 2.27 In general, lessons are planned effectively and well organised. Classrooms are quiet and orderly, and teachers lead and manage their pupils well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good throughout the school. Behaviour is of a high standard. Target setting is used to good effect in English and mathematics and the process supports pupils' learning well, but targets are not used in all years or shared across the curriculum.
- 2.28 Resources within the school are plentiful and well organised; teachers use these resources to good effect. The computer suite is well resourced and organised. Some classrooms have computers installed and linked to the network, but many do not. Similarly, some teachers are skilled in the use of ICT, but some are less confident.
- 2.29 Teachers work hard and successfully to encourage the enthusiasm of their pupils. Lessons are interesting and engage pupils' concentration, but not when the subject matter is dull or the pace slow. In some lessons, the learning is over directed and pupils have insufficient opportunity to think for themselves, make decisions and be responsible for their learning. In these lessons the questioning of pupils does not often provide sufficient challenge.
- 2.30 In good lessons, high expectations and challenging questions stimulate intellectual and, when appropriate, physical effort from pupils. In an outstanding lesson, for example, pupils from Year 4 were composing sequences by developing balance and movement, with complete physical control. The lesson was presented with such enthusiasm and rigorous challenge that interaction between the teacher and the pupils became a powerful force for learning.
- 2.31 In the Foundation Stage, teachers are very successful in developing children's confidence, self-esteem and independence. The teachers understand how children develop and learn at this age and plan carefully to meet their children's learning needs. The support assistants in the Foundation Stage are very effective in supporting and helping children to progress. In the Reception classes, however, there is insufficient support and the school is taking steps to remedy this.
- 2.32 When appropriate, a learning support teacher or assistant gives effective help in lessons to pupils with learning difficulties. At other times, pupils benefit from well-taught individual or

- small group-lessons. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is based on good, well-focused assessments.
- 2.33 In the recent past teachers have worked to improve the quality of assessment and to introduce a new policy. Arrangements are now in place to enable staff to evaluate the standards pupils attain across all subjects. The school is now in a position to move forward with its use of assessment for planning for lessons, for the curriculum, for informing the school development planning and for informing parents of their children's progress.
- 2.34 In the Foundation Stage, pupils' progress is continually checked in line with the Foundation Stage Profile and the Early Learning Goals for children of that age. In the rest of the school, pupils' attainment is assessed regularly, through the use of a range of standardised tests. Each pupil has an individual assessment file. The results are checked carefully to monitor pupils' progress and to identify those who require learning support. Although a good start has been made, the school recognises that assessment analysis and monitoring arrangements are still in the process of development. The school is keen to use the data now available so that teachers and the management can be sure that each pupil is making as much progress as possible.
- 2.35 The use of assessment to inform the planning of lessons to meet pupils' learning needs is more varied. In some cases it is used well to inform planning, but in others it is limited. When assessment is used well, higher-attaining pupils are challenged by extension tasks. In Year 6 English for example, a new set of learning materials was introduced as a result of assessments showing a need for different course work for more able pupils, but such good practice is not consistent in all lessons or subjects.
- 2.36 Arrangements for the assessment of pupils with learning difficulties is good, but it is dependent on the energy and enthusiasm of the special educational needs co-ordinator endeavouring to consult all relevant teachers, rather than set into the procedures of the school. Teachers hold internal reviews and compile individual education plans. They carefully monitor pupils' achievement and progress towards the targets in those plans.
- 2.37 Overall, marking of work is regular and thorough and in many instances, attention is paid to providing encouragement and praise. Good practice is in evidence in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, where some teachers show pupils how to improve or set focused individual learning targets. Elsewhere, however, marking was often cursory or concentrated too much on remarks about the presentation or completion of work and did not comment on the quality of the work. Currently, the school's marking policy is inconsistently applied across subjects and year groups.
- 2.38 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The care that staff devote to the well-being of the pupils is a strong feature of the school, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Strong relationships and a caring ethos prevail throughout the school. The quality of these relationships, and the arrangements for pastoral care, help the school to fulfil its aim to provide a friendly and caring environment for all pupils. In discussion pupils describe the school as being “friendly”. Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are effective.
- 3.2 Class teachers are at the heart of the arrangements for care. They know their pupils extremely well and they are very effective in this role. The headmaster and senior staff provide good support for the class teachers. Pupils feel secure, and know that they can rely on teachers to support them and to overcome difficulties when they occur. The quality of relationships between adults and pupils and amongst pupils is strong and supportive.
- 3.3 Strong emphasis is placed on positive behaviour, self-discipline and responsibility are emphasised. Pupils are encouraged to behave well through incentives such as golden certificates, stars, headmaster’s commendations and community awards which are presented in Friday assemblies. Suitable sanctions are in place for any poor behaviour. The staff handbook gives clear guidance about rewards and sanctions.
- 3.4 Measures to guard against harassment and bullying are effective, on the rare occasions they are needed. An anti-bullying policy is in place, though pupils do not feel that bullying is an issue and that if there is a minor incident it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are happy to go to teachers to ask for extra help and are confident they will be listened to and their concerns dealt with.
- 3.5 The school has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. The staff have all received recent training and the head of infant department has received enhanced training. Following changes in senior management, enhanced training is planned for other staff. Measures are in place for the safe recruitment of staff. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained.
- 3.6 The efficient receptionists and headmaster’s secretary are both recently qualified in first aid, and a well-equipped first aid room provides a good base for pupils who are sick. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the storage and use of pupils’ medicines in school. All accidents are properly recorded in the accident book located in the school office and appropriately reported to parents. Risk assessments are carried out on all activities in and away from the school.
- 3.7 The school has a comprehensive first aid policy, but now needs to be brought up to date because, since it was written, a small number of pupils with conditions that could need immediate medical attention have come to the school. Emergency first-aid training is regularly provided for all staff.
- 3.8 Overall, arrangements to ensure pupils’ health and safety are effective and the school has due regard for health and safety statutory obligations. All necessary measures have been taken to minimize the risk of fire. Tests, fire practices and risk assessments are carried out regularly. Following a rigorous assessment of all aspects of fire safety, a detailed and focused development plan has been implemented. A health and safety committee, chaired by the bursar, meets regularly.

- 3.9 The children enjoy nutritious school meals and lunchtimes are pleasant social occasions. The school is a safe and caring environment where pupils are happy and relaxed. They tell us that they like coming to school.
- 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.11 The quality of links with parents and the community is good. The school has a good partnership with parents, who strongly support the school's work with their children. The parents of more than half the pupils responded to the questionnaire in advance of the inspection. Almost unanimously, parents were very pleased with the range of subjects offered to pupils and were very happy with the help and guidance given to pupils. Almost all parents believe that the teaching helps their child to make good progress.
- 3.12 Parents are invited to parents' consultation evenings throughout the year, which provide opportunities for parents to see and discuss their child's work. The school provides satisfactory regular written reports throughout the year. Reports are clearly organised and presented. They describe, in general terms, how well pupils are achieving, but do not always include sufficient detail. Information about how pupils can improve is limited. Reports for pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 have targets for pupils to work towards, but for pupils in Years 3 to 6 there is little indication of targets in the reports, even though pupils are set targets in school in some subjects. There are informal opportunities for parents to respond to the report.
- 3.13 Parents are welcomed into the school, but casual contact with teachers is constrained by concerns for security. Parents and teachers meet together at the beginning of each year to discuss class routines and curriculum matters. The school welcomes and encourages parents to make an appointment to discuss their child's progress and attainment at other times. Parents of the youngest children have an opportunity to talk to their children's teachers at the beginning and the end of the school day. In the questionnaire a large percentage of parents indicated that they were unhappy about the lack of encouragement by the school for parents to be involved in its life and work. The inspectors do not share parents' concerns in this area and believe that opportunities provided by the school for parental involvement are good, if a little formal.
- 3.14 A number of opportunities exist for parents to be involved in school activities throughout the year. Parents are invited to attend class assemblies, Christmas and spring concerts and other events such as a presentation put on by the Year 2 country-dancing club. The Friends of the Junior School is a thriving parents' association, which is very active and works closely with the school, supporting it in many ways. It organises fund raising events that raise considerable sums for the school, enabling them to purchase resources such as the wooden ship in the infant playground and benches in the junior playground. They also organise a variety of successful social events for the school.
- 3.15 There was concern expressed in the parents' questionnaire about the way that complaints were dealt with. The school, however, has a good complaints procedure and details of this are sent out to all parents in the parents' handbook. Letters to parents are understanding and courteous.
- 3.16 Parents are provided with good information about the school and its work. The school's prospectus is attractive and illustrates the school's ethos and environment and, along with the school's website, ensures that prospective parents are provided with an insight into the work

of the school. Regular newsletters keep current parents suitably informed. The Year Book is very well produced and provides good information about the school year. The clearly written parents' handbook, infant handbook and curriculum handbook enable parents to be fully informed. Together these publications describe the range of the schools' activities and honour pupils' achievements.

- 3.17 Good links with the community and local services enrich pupils' experiences, as when pupils in Year 1 visited a local Royal Mail sorting office. They also enjoyed a visit to the school by a local librarian. Pupils in Year 5 had a visit from the anti-bullying officer for Plymouth and, on another occasion, a talk on recycling was given. A youth worker from a local church comes in to school to take assembly every week. The pupils enjoy these visits, which enhance the educational experience provided for the pupils. The school choir visits local rest homes at Christmas to sing carols and, amongst others, visits have been made to the school by the police, fire service and Royal Navy.
- 3.18 School facilities are available for use by outside organisations. The school premises are used by Plymouth University Fencing Club and a nationally based theatre group uses the theatre in the summer holidays.
- 3.19 The school raises funds for local and national charities such as the NSPCC and Woodside Animal Shelter and has supported the work of a hospital in Malawi. All these activities enable positive links with the community to be forged and enhance the pupils' understanding and care for the wider world.
- 3.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 A sub-committee of the main College Board provides sound governance and guidance for the junior school. The sub-committee, which meets at least each term, has full executive powers and reports back to the main committee. The minutes from meetings are detailed and thorough and show this to be an effective method of operating.
- 4.2 Governors are aware of their responsibilities and involve themselves effectively in educational development and financial planning, with the support and guidance of the effective bursar. They have training and discussion sessions to inform and support their work.
- 4.3 Governors have a sound insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governors, with the headmaster managed the move into new premises and the integration of the two schools very effectively. In addition, standards of achievement have been maintained. Even so, some aspects of management have not been fully dealt with. Governors are aware of the shortcomings and have acted quickly to set up procedures to resolve them.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 Overall, the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Good standards have been maintained through a period of considerable disruption, with the move into new premises and the amalgamation of staff and pupils from two schools. The aims of the school have been maintained and strengthened during this period.
- 4.5 In the last few years the focus for management has been on relocating, equipping and integrating the two schools. This was achieved very effectively and the school now works as a cohesive whole. A number of areas of management are not, however, in place, some of them key issues from the last report. There is no monitoring of teaching by the senior management team, although some peer appraisal has taken place. Appraisal, or performance management, of the staff at any level is informal and, for teachers, where evident, not linked to monitoring of lessons. Job descriptions are not in place for any of the subject coordinators. A new draft school development plan has been produced in the last few weeks to supersede the original. The new plan sets out a framework for future planning, includes elements for the professional development of staff and gives indicators for the successful achievement of the plan. Subject and some whole school policies are in place and other whole school policies have been drafted in the last few weeks. Assessment has just started to be used systematically to inform the planning for teaching, for curriculum planning and for management decisions and planning.
- 4.6 The headmaster and the senior management team were appointed three weeks before the inspection and have worked tirelessly to prepare the school for the inspection. The good work that has been put into the new school development plan is a good beginning, but clearly, without the necessary structures in place to clearly identify all the school's strengths and weaknesses, this will take much longer to develop. Communication between the headmaster and the staff is very good and teachers reported that they are very happy with the present set up and feel well supported.

- 4.7 In the absence of job descriptions the role of subject co-ordinators varies. Some focus mainly on their own work, while others work effectively to support their colleagues. Consequently links between specialist teachers and their generalist colleagues vary in their effectiveness.
- 4.8 Lack of monitoring of teaching by the senior management team has resulted in a failure to recognise and address the shortcomings evident in teaching. The present senior management team are fully aware of the need for rigorous monitoring of the schools activities and have already started to remedy the matter. Most of the needs for professional development have been met on an individual basis. The management have outlined structures in the new development plan to develop a whole-school approach to in-service training, in addition to individual needs.
- 4.9 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and makes good arrangements to support the new teachers. There are, however, no newly qualified teachers at present although there were last year. All adults working in the school are subject to the necessary checks at the time of appointment, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau.
- 4.10 Financial matters are well managed by the bursar, who works with both the junior and the senior schools. The school is housed in premises of a high standard for its pupils, it is mostly well resourced for learning and the resources are well organised. However, while some classrooms have a computer installed, many do not. The administration of the school runs smoothly and effectively, and communication on day-to-day matters is good. Office staff, who work at the entrance to the school, present a calm and welcoming atmosphere for the school and are highly efficient.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 In general Plymouth College Junior School meets its aims and aspirations. Teaching is good so that pupils' achievements are good and almost all pupils move on to the schools of their choice. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Their life at the school is rich and rewarding and they expressed that they are happy at school. They make the most of the many opportunities offered to them by the programme of activities and achieve good standards in those activities. There is a very strong sense of cohesion in the community underpinned by warm supportive relationships and mutual respect, in which all pupils are valued. The quality of care, guidance and personal development is a strong feature of the school to which all staff show strong commitment. Pupils respond by demonstrating a thoughtful and responsible approach to other people, the environment and charitable causes. The commitment and expertise of the staff has been a major factor in maintaining the high standards and cohesion of the school during times of considerable change and resettlement. During that time some aspects of management took priority, leaving other areas to fall behind. The new senior management team is now addressing these urgently. It is important to note that, following this period of change, standards of pupils learning and care have not fallen.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained in all areas of activity. Provision for all activities and areas of learning have improved by the move into high quality, purpose built accommodation and the re-equipping of the school. Teaching has improved overall, but some of the weaker features reported in 2001 are still to be seen. Management has not been rigorous, but deficiencies are now being addressed. Governors are fully aware of the need to improve management and are fully supportive of the headmaster and the new senior management team.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to improve further on the good provision already established the school should take the following action.
1. Ensure that governors institute procedures to monitor the workings of the school with sufficient rigour, so that they are more closely aware of its strengths and weaknesses.
 2. Take steps to improve the information available about the work of the school and the achievement of its pupils by:
 - improving the use of assessment so that managers have better information about the progress that pupils are making, teachers and curriculum managers can plan most effectively and parents can be better informed about the progress their children are making;
 - establishing systems for the systematic monitoring of teaching and other aspects of the work of the school to better inform the management about its strengths and weaknesses;
 - re-establishing regular appraisal, or performance management, for all staff and providing all staff with job descriptions.
 3. Use the information gained to compile a comprehensive development plan that draws on a rigorous appraisal of the schools performance and plans the medium and longer term growth of the school, with particular focus on the professional development of the teaching force.
 4. Improve the quality of teaching to reduce the proportion of over directed teaching, to promote more opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and to challenge pupils more consistently at all levels, in particular the most able.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 12th to 15th November 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

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| Mr John Ayerst | Reporting Inspector |
| Mrs Mary Allen | Headteacher of an IAPS Preparatory School. |
| Mr Brian Jones | Head of Department at an IAPS Preparatory School |
| Mr Oliver Lister | Headteacher of an ISA Preparatory School |
| Mrs Angela Russell | Former headteacher of an IAPS Pre-preparatory School |