



# Poltair School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 112052  
**LEA** Cornwall  
**Inspection number** 278837  
**Inspection dates** 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Barbara Wintersgill HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Trevarthian Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		St Austell
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Cornwall PL25 4BZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01726 874520
<b>Number on roll</b>	937	<b>Fax number</b>	01726 874529
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Diana Pride
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 March 2004	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs H Mcilroy

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 7 June 2006 - 8 June 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 278837
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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**

Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The school draws its pupils from the town of St Austell and outlying rural districts. The school is a specialist sports college. A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Poltair School is a rapidly improving school that provides a satisfactory education with many good features. Two years ago, the school was judged to have serious weaknesses. The new headteacher adopted a 'fresh start' attitude to improvement. Under her leadership and with the support of an effective management team and an outstanding governing body, the school has made rapid improvement, particularly in the key area of teaching and learning. All the weaknesses identified in the last report have been dealt with well or very well, particularly the requirement to provide and improve the quality of ICT for all pupils. This improvement has had a positive impact on teaching and learning across the school. The school has become very strong in evaluating its own performance and this also has contributed to the improvement in teaching, learning and achievement. Teaching is now good and its effect can be seen particularly in the current Year 7 and 8 where pupils are making good progress, especially in science and mathematics. This is not yet matched in English because the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining senior English teachers. It will take longer for the impact of these improvements to be seen in improved achievement over time, particularly in higher year groups which are still catching up after a poor start under the previous regime. The school is well placed to continue improving.

### What the school should do to improve further

- build on the work to improve pupils' achievement, particularly for boys and in English
- build on the work to spread effective practice in teaching to bring all teaching to the level of the best.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

At the time of the last report, achievement was unsatisfactory. Achievement and standards are now satisfactory because managers have done a great deal in a short time to raise teachers' expectations of how well their pupils can achieve. As a result, although pupils now make good progress in lessons, the progress made by pupils in Year 11 since they joined the school in Year 7 is only satisfactory because they are still catching up from their first few years in the school when teaching was unsatisfactory. Boys make less progress than girls.

When pupils join the school, their standards are just below average. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 A\*-G grades at GCSE is average but the proportion gaining 5 A\*-C grades is significantly below. Overall standards are below average. There is a variation in achievement across different subjects and pupils achieve particularly well in physical education (PE) and art and design.

By the end of Year 9, standards and achievement are below average. As a result of the long term absence of key English staff and the school's difficulty in appointing suitable new English teachers, pupils' achievements in English are not keeping pace with other

core subjects. The school is doing all that can reasonably be expected to resolve this issue. The increased use of the available information and data over the last two years has led to more accurate target setting for pupils and a greater understanding of how to improve levels of achievement for all pupils. School data shows that pupils in Years 7 and 8 are already achieving well and this bodes well for further improvements in achievement over time.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Good efforts by the headteacher to remedy weaknesses mean that pupils' personal development and well-being are now good. Attendance is now satisfactory and punctuality is not a problem. Attendance has improved enormously since the last inspection as a result of the schools work with pupils and parents. Most pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time to their lessons. The school works with parents to improve the attendance of the small group of pupils who have more frequent absences. As a result, more of these pupils are attending school regularly. The school monitors any incidents and the use of exclusion. Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes towards learning. In lessons, they show a good level of interest, work hard and remain focused. They are willing to answer questions and to offer opinions. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is now very good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school gives appropriate priority to the importance of a healthy, active lifestyle. Pupils are confident and polite. Relationships are good and the ethos throughout the school is very harmonious. Teachers give attention to pupils' personal development.

The Every Child Matters Passport, a recent but important innovation, gives the school a way to track different aspects of individual pupils' personal development and well-being. Systematic use of such information would enable the school to evaluate and improve both provision and outcome.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress in lessons because managers' efforts to monitor and evaluate teaching have resulted in improved teaching and learning, which is now good. At the time of the last inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory overall but the report indicated areas of weakness. Since then, the school has invested considerable effort in the improvement of teaching. Teaching and learning are now good. During the last two years, the school has monitored and evaluated teaching and learning in a very systematic way. Inspectors observed a sample of lessons from Year 7 to Year 10 and all were at least satisfactory, with most good or outstanding. In each case, the inspector's judgement at least confirmed the school's judgement. This capacity to make accurate judgements and give constructive feedback on lessons has made a

significant contribution to the school's improvement. Records of monitoring, with accompanying points for improvement, show that managers know how to judge teaching and learning and how to bring about improvement.

Pupils are positive about how much better their lessons are now. They say that they make good progress because they know their level of attainment and what they need to do to improve. They also say that they and their fellow pupils are positive about learning and that misbehaving pupils are not impeding learning. Inspectors found that teachers were good at motivating pupils and that they introduced the appropriate level of challenge to lessons. Despite such significant gains, the school recognises the need for further improvement. Pupils, although they show positive attitudes, rarely showed independence or initiative in learning. Related to this is a weakness in teachers' marking. Assessment was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection and the school has done much to improve it. In day-to-day marking, however, some teachers rarely indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum provided is good. Pupils study a broad range of subjects in Years 7-9. The extensive selection of courses in Years 10 and 11 meets pupils' needs well. Good collaboration with other schools and colleges provides subjects not available in school, such as engineering, Russian and Japanese. The school has evaluated its provision effectively, modified it where appropriate, and adapted in order to meet the needs of individual pupils. The business and commerce course which all pupils take in Years 10 and 11 ensures they have good opportunities to learn about the world of work and develop their ICT and business skills. The school has used funding from its specialist status well to broaden the sports curriculum, and to work effectively to support sport in its partner secondary and primary schools. Large numbers of pupils participate in musical and sporting activities. The curriculum is enriched with a satisfactory range of visits to museums and theatres and local and overseas residential trips.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a very caring and supportive environment in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued. Pupils' academic and personal development is carefully monitored and assessed by tutors and heads of year to identify and deal with under-achievement. Teachers know their pupils well and provide good support for a range of needs. They make very effective use of outside agencies to provide expertise not available in school. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported very well through the Student Services Unit. There is satisfactory support for those for whom English is not their first language and for traveller pupils. Guidance on subject choices for Years 10 and 11 and study beyond Year 11 is good. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily. The school lunch menu provides a good range of healthy options. Appropriately in a Sports College, pupils have plenty

of opportunities to participate in sport, and a large proportion take part in after-school sports clubs and teams.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good, a considerable improvement on the previous inspection. The headteacher, ably supported by a committed team, monitors thoroughly and has clearly identified how the school can sustain change and further improve previously unsatisfactory aspects. In particular, the headteacher has encouraged and empowered subject leaders to an impressive extent, so that they demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm in initiating strategies which are beginning to improve achievement and standards. A pervasive culture of openness and collaboration now prevails. The school's use of data to improve performance is beginning to yield results, but is not yet having a consistent effect. The governing body is outstanding: it is committed, knowledgeable, holds leaders rigidly to account and has a clear perception of what makes the school tick. The school uses limited resources well, and has successfully addressed previous problems of financial deficits and a falling roll. The leadership has also successfully addressed instability in staffing and deficiencies in accommodation, for example in science. Another strength is the school's links with local support agencies and schools, seen for example in the sports college's promotion of high standards and enjoyment in the local area. The leadership ensures that all pupils are very well cared for. Parents are very appreciative of most of what the school does. The leadership is well on the way to ensuring that the quality of personal care for all pupils continues to be allied with improvements in pupils' learning and achievement both inside and outside the classroom.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know, a team of inspectors recently visited your school and I am writing to let you know what we said in our report. We very much enjoyed being in the school. Thank you very much for making us so welcome and for telling us your views.

You will know that last time the school was inspected, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. The very good news is that your school has improved so much since the last inspection that it is now a satisfactory school with many good features. Teaching has improved and is now good. This helps you to make good progress in lessons. The school takes good care of you so that your personal development is good and the curriculum gives you good opportunities to follow courses that interest you. The school works well with outside agencies, such as other schools and colleges, to help you learn. Most of you told us that you enjoy being at the school.

Many of you told us that the school has improved very quickly because of the strong leadership of your new headteacher. We agreed with you and praised her for inspiring you and your teachers to accept new ways of working. In particular, we praised the way in which senior teachers observe your lessons frequently so that they know what improvements are needed. We also praised your outstanding school governors for their part in improving the school.

In order to keep these improvements going, we said that your teachers should continue to improve the progress you make from Year 7 to Year 11. Test and examination results have not improved yet because older pupils did not get off to such a good start as Years 7 and 8. In particular, boys need to do better and you must all work hard to improve in English.

I wish you all very well in the future.