

Information about Portsmouth College

At the start of the 2006/7 academic year, Portsmouth College was just beginning a long journey to where we are today. With just over 650 16-18 year old students, a poor profile in the city, facilities much in need of a face-lift and student success rates which left a lot to be desired, things needed to change. Thirteen years on, with the support of a brilliant team of staff and governors, as well as a wide range of great city partners, Portsmouth College has been transformed. This has since been reflected through the recent Solent Regional Area Based Review (ABR) process from which Portsmouth College has emerged as a viable, resilient and robust institution, proudly continuing as an independent, standalone, high quality and innovative sixth form college.

Student Enrolment, Success and Progression

16-19 year old student enrolments are now over 1,400, having literally doubled in the last thirteen years. With recent 15% growth, Portsmouth College is one of the fastest growing colleges in the UK in percentage terms. The College is now the first choice institution for the majority of 16 year olds leaving the city's state secondary schools. It has also begun to draw students in from the private sector, with students from the High School for Girls, Mayville High School and St John's College all now enrolled. It is also beginning to draw students in from farther afield; Fareham, Gosport and Isle of Wight based learners are all now attending.

We are well known for being a College which is filled with positive energy and which has a unique structure of the day: 9.55 am – 4 pm, in two blocks, for all lessons and no trapped time for students. Eight successive years of improvements in results have also played a big part in our growth. Record numbers of level 3 students were successful in their courses last summer and 45% of them achieved A* - B grades or their equivalent. Numbers of students progressing on to Russell Group and other top 30 universities have also increased significantly between 2011 and 2018.

We were graded 'good' in all areas by Ofsted in March 2017. In a glowing report inspectors said that the College was an institution where *'students flourish, become more confident, enjoy their studies and make good progress.'*

A Culture of Innovation

The College has continually sought to innovate over the last twelve years. This has been most obvious in the unique 'Curious and Creative Learning' project which has seen all students, teachers and student-facing support staff receive an iPad. These are being used to transform learning, teaching and assessment at the College.

The devices provide teachers with the technology to make lessons ever more interesting, up to date and engaging. They give students the chance to develop the independent research and digital literacy skills that are vital to their success at College and in the world beyond, and which are much valued by leading universities and employers. The project continues to genuinely transform the way everyone works at the College. The College has also embraced the need to develop the employability skills of its learners, to help them progress successfully to further study and employment. The 'E6 Programme' provides all students with the opportunity to undertake work experience, volunteering placements, enterprise programmes, get more exercise and sign up for 'PEP' talks. These 'PEP' talks help students prepare for progression to either university or the world of work, with expert outside speakers running workshops. The enterprise programme sees interested students given the chance to develop their own small business ideas and put these into practice. Work experience is being arranged for students with a wide range of employers across the city. Students are also able to volunteer to help in a range of settings, most notably primary school classes, assisting with reading and maths. Students are offering life-changing one-to-one help in these contexts.

The College Sports Academy runs not only the traditional team sports in areas like football, rugby, hockey, netball and basketball, but also a range of exercise classes and individual participation sports such as Zumba, futsal, table-tennis and boxercise. The 'E6 Programme' is designed to equip students with the wider soft skills they need to succeed at university and in work. The programme also compliments the work the College is doing with local employers, through the provision of a growing range of apprenticeship frameworks. These are allowing students to 'earn while they learn'; spending four days a week at work and a day a week getting sector-specific qualifications in College.

This culture of innovation enabled Portsmouth College to win an Association of Colleges Beacon Award for the use of Technology in FE, 2017/18, effectively meaning we are the best College using hand-held technology with our students in the country! We were also shortlisted for the Times Educational Supplement Awards in the 'Best Teaching and Learning Initiative' and 'Outstanding Use of Technology', putting us in the top three nationally in both these categories.

Partnership Working

The backbone of the success of the last thirteen years has been the genuine partnership working approach the College has adopted in all that it does. The Principal and all staff have worked hard to meet the needs of the local community whenever and wherever they have been able. The very close working relationship with the city's secondary schools is testament to this.

From simple changes such as holding our interviews in the evenings and at weekends so pupils don't miss lessons, through providing a specialist 'more able' programme for the highest achieving pupils in schools, to running revision workshops for year 11 pupils in the run up to their GCSE exams, the College always seeks to work in harmony with local schools. This work was given national recognition in 2017 when the College came runner up in the Sixth Form Colleges Association Community Impact Award.

More broadly the College is also well represented on a range of bodies, organisations and working parties across the city, it co-operates closely with Portsmouth City Council and is a member of the Portsmouth Education Partnership. It also has excellent relationships with the local authority, elected councillors and both local MPs. The ethos of the College is built around local, effective collaboration and it always seeks to meet the needs of the city.

2005 to 2018 has seen enormous change in the world of post-16 education. This has been more than matched by the changes at Portsmouth College. It is now a thriving institution, woven into the fabric of the city, embracing innovation, continuing to recruit ever more students and delivering better and better outcomes for them. The College now wishes to sustain, consolidate and strengthen its Ofsted grade of 'good' whilst continuously striving for excellence.