



Press release

12 July 2018

Plymouth Studio School closure

The Department for Education has made a final decision and agreed to terminate, by mutual agreement, the funding agreement for Plymouth Studio School at the end of August 2018 and therefore the school will close on 1st September 2018.

A decision in principle to close the school was made earlier this year following discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner's (RSC) office and the Department for Education, and a subsequent 'listening period' was held for parents and interested parties to share their views on the proposed closure.

Plymouth Studio School, like many other studio schools across the country, faced significant challenges regarding its viability, and was unable to attract enough students to secure sufficient funding to remain open.

The school has capacity for up to 300 students but in April 2018, there were only 155 pupils registered, with this number expected to drop once Year 11 and Year 13 students finished the school year.

Its challenges to attract new pupils or to find a multi academy trust to join were compounded by the outcome of a recent Ofsted inspection, which rated the school as Inadequate.

Parents have been notified today (July 12th) of the final decision to close the school, and staff have been informed directly.

During the last few months, the Studio School has been working closely with the local authority to support parents to find alternative school places locally, and to enable a smooth transition for pupils to their new school settings.

All of the registered pupils at the Studio School now have the offer of new school places when the school closes, with the majority having already transferred to their new schools.

Sam Abbott, Chair of Governors of Plymouth Studio School, said: "Many Studio Schools have faced significant challenges and Plymouth is no exception, with the school struggling to secure adequate pupil numbers to ensure sufficient Government funding.

“We have been working closely with Plymouth City Council to ensure pupils have been able to find new school places, and to facilitate, where possible, the transfer of specialist courses to other educational providers; we are happy this has been possible, and that all registered pupils now have school places earmarked, or have already transferred.

“We are very grateful to the 15 members of staff at Plymouth Studio School, in particular Headteacher Mark Cahill, for their tremendous professionalism and dedication these last few weeks, working hard to look after their pupils’ wellbeing after the difficult news was first announced, and continuing to provide the very best teaching for pupils under difficult circumstances.”

Plymouth Studio School opened at its current premises in November 2016 offering a combination of GCSEs, A Levels and BTEC qualifications combined with specialist pathways in Sports Performance, Sports Development and Coaching and Sports Management for students in Years 10-13.

One of the key concerns for parents, pupils and families was that after the proposed closure of the Studio School was announced there was the lack of alternative provision for some specialist courses at other local educational establishments once the Studio School closed.

As a result, provision has been secured at a new educational setting – City College Plymouth – for Year 12 Studio School students studying for specialist sport-related BTEC courses to be accommodated to continue their studies on an appropriate educational pathway. The school is working closely with City College Plymouth to manage this transition.

Cllr Jon Taylor, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation, said the council is not involved in decisions around the closure of academies, but has a role in placing pupils and supporting families.

He said “We have worked hard to find suitable alternative school places for all of the pupils at Plymouth Studio School, and to help facilitate transfers as quickly and effectively as possible.

“We are continuing to support students who have transferred to other schools, and we have been allocated £301,665 from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to fund students who are currently in Year 10 but will be moving to Year 11 in September.

“This funding will be allocated to support the education of pupils in their new schools.”

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