

High Schools for Athletes Research Project

Case Study Five

Plymouth College



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Plymouth College, Devon, United Kingdom

“Happiness, Learning, Opportunity, Community, Confidence, Success.”

Introduction

Founded in 1877 and located in the centre of Plymouth, a city approximately 190 miles south west of London, Plymouth College is a senior (high school, educating pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years) and sixth form (pre-university, for pupils aged between 16 and 18) with a total 11-18 intake of 542 pupils. The school is a private institution; fees for the senior school (high school level) are approximately £4,000 per annum for day students, or £8,000 for boarders.

The school has an extensive programme across 13 sports, but offers specialist elite sport scholarship programmes in swimming and modern pentathlon, which offers elite young athletes a 50% discount on school fees.

Facilities

The school features a large sports hall (for badminton, basketball and indoor cricket), a 25-meter indoor pool, two squash courts, a weights room and cardio vascular suite, a climbing wall and indoor rifle range. Outdoors on the grounds of the school there is a sports pitch, an astro turf pitch and a hard court. The school also has access to a nearby 50m pool for use by the elite swimming programme.

Additional support

The school runs programmes and teams in over 15 sports. Plymouth College's swimming and modern pentathlon programmes are considered to be among the best in the country and consistently attract elite-level young athletes. Recognized by Sport England and the National Association for Gifted Children, scholarships for both schemes provide a 50% school fee discount.

Modern Pentathlon and Fencing Academy

- The scheme comprises of tailor-made programmes in Modern Pentathlon, Fencing, shooting, running and show jumping.
- Training is available in purpose-made facilities on and off site.
- For fencing, Plymouth College students have won 48 British Championships, reached 2 world finals and competed in numerous Commonwealth junior and senior medals.

Plymouth College and Plymouth Leander Swimming Scholarship scheme

- The scheme hosts six full-time coaches, running a programme that operates for 6 days a week over a total of 75 hours.
- A qualified sports physiologist, nutritionist and physiotherapist provide additional support.
- The programme runs throughout school holidays and incorporates a scheduled taper period to prepare for tournaments.
- A significant number of the programme's young athletes have progressed to national and international prominence, including five recent Olympians including Ruta Meilutyte (gold medal, 2012 Olympic London Olympic Games for Lithuania) and Tom Dailey (bronze medal, 2012 Olympic Games for Great Britain).

Student athletes live in twin rooms rather than dormitories. Extensive support ensures that the rigorous programme does not impact on academic life in the school. Each student athlete is assigned a mentor from a designated coach or athlete, alongside a personal tutor responsible for monitoring academic progress.

In the words of Cassandra Patten, former Plymouth College student and 2008 Olympic bronze medalist, "My six years as part of the Plymouth programme gave me the best foundation to win my Olympic medal. I can fully recommend it for ambitious young swimmers."

Curriculum

The school operates a broad curriculum for all students, with additional academic support and study options to allow students to acquire extra tuition and opportunities to pursue areas of personal interest, including courses outside of the standard school timetable. Alongside A-Level courses, Plymouth College also offers the International Baccalaureate as the principal sixth-form qualification option.

Partnerships

The school's elite swimming scheme is closely connected to British Swimming (the UK's national governing body for the sport) and the coaching team includes national squad coaches and support staff. The programme is supported by the UK's Amateur Swimming Association Club and Coach Funding project. A partnership with the nearby 'Plymouth Life Centre' public leisure facility (featuring a ten lane, 50m pool opened in 2012) allows the programme exclusive and daily access to one of the UK's newest Olympic-standard swimming facilities.

Suggestions

Plymouth College's elite programmes are genuinely world-class training systems in the context of a highly supportive and academically rigorous learning environment. Elite student athletes have access to some of the country's most experienced coaches and train in modern and well-resourced facilities. These programmes have produced several high profile Olympic medallists and this is likely to further drive the appeal of these programmes – and therefore the already high profile and appeal of the school as a whole

- to an international market of highly talented young athletes of high school age.

For further information, the school's website is www.plymouthcollege.com

World Academy of Sport

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