

# Helston Community College

Helston Community College, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 8NR

**Inspection dates** 19– 20 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students have extremely positive attitudes towards school and each other. Outstanding behaviour helps students enjoy learning and keep safe.
- Teaching is good and helping students make good progress in lessons and over time.
- By the end of Year 11, students have made good progress in a range of subjects. More-able students achieve very well and exceed national expectations.
- The sixth form is good and standards are continuing to rise.
- Students' attendance is above average and the students are enthusiastic to stay on at college in the sixth form.
- The headteacher is ambitious for all the students in school and for their futures. He works tirelessly with the governors to broaden the vision of students' vision of what they could achieve.
- Governors and senior leaders have a good understanding of what still needs to be put right, based on accurate evaluation. They have shown they can make the adjustments to the quality of teaching necessary for further rapid improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching in the English department does not yet provide sufficient challenge, particularly for middle ability boys.
- The literacy and numeracy needs of the students are not given enough attention in all subjects.
- The college is still working on ways to ensure students gain a better understanding of life in contemporary British society.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice.
- Inspectors observed 43 part lessons, seven of which were jointly observed with members of the leadership team. Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to some lessons to scrutinise work, observe physical education being taught, and to look at the support being provided to disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers and the heads of subjects. They also met five members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. They met informally and formally with groups of students, representing most ages and abilities, to discuss their experiences of college and to hear a few read.
- Inspectors viewed a large range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation and school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding and student welfare, records of monitoring teaching and data about students’ achievements and attendance.
- They considered the views of 132 parents from the online Parent View survey and the views of 57 staff who returned questionnaires were also taken into account.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Palk, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Susan Smith

Additional Inspector

Kevin Wright

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hazlewood

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Marian Marks

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Helston Community College is a very large college, on three different sites, which became part of Co-operative Education Trust in June 2013. The wider Foundation Trust, of which they have been part of since in September 2009, includes partners from both higher and further education, the Diocese of Truro, a local secondary school, nine primary schools, the county council and the local careers advice provider.
- The college draws students from an extensive rural catchment area.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is above that found nationally. Those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The percentage of student known to be eligible for the additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after and students with a parent of the armed services, which is called the pupil premium, is below average.
- The vast majority of students are from a White British background. The college had a mathematics subject inspection in May 2012.
- The college makes use of alternative provision for a few students at Nine Maidens Short Stay School.
- Helston Day Care Nursery provides childcare for up to 30 children on the same site and is reported on separately.
- The college meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
  - provide appropriately challenging and stretching work for the middle ability students in Key Stage 3 so that all achieve as well as they can
  - provide more English homework for students and ensure it is effectively marked so they know how well they are doing
  - make use of small group learning strategies in more English lessons
  - fully exploit opportunities to develop students' skills in writing, reading, communication and mathematics in all subjects.
- Explore ways to further enhance students' understanding of multicultural Britain.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' standards of attainment on entry to Year 7 in reading, writing, and mathematics are broadly average, although fluctuate either side of this, year on year. The proportion of students who achieve five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, is average. It has declined in the last three years from well above average. A decline in the performance of middle ability students in English has contributed to this.
- Evidence from past examination results and the detailed information provided by the college offer firm evidence that students make good progress and some make outstanding progress. Progress is not consistently outstanding because of variations in the performance of middle ability students and others and the performance of boys and girls is not yet equal.
- In the past, achievement in mathematics has been very strong. Some average ability students are entered in the autumn term of their final year as a means to raise their motivation and confidence. This practice had a mixed result last year and attainment dipped slightly; however, achievement overall in mathematics remains good.
- The number of students on track to gain an A\* to C grade in English is rising sharply. A focus on high quality teaching in Year 10 and a more rigorous programme of monitoring and tracking in Key Stage 3 are successfully reducing the gaps between English and mathematics.
- The progress of more able students is good and all reach their potential. The percentage attaining higher grades of A\* and A for their GCSEs is rising even further and this group of students consistently makes more than expected progress than nationally.
- The Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding have been used effectively to fund a reading and writing programme and study training sessions. The catch-up funding has been effective in helping younger students develop confidence in their reading and gain the skills to tackle new vocabulary. The gap between these students and other students has closed to less than half a term. A small proportion of the funding is now used to ensure the gap in mathematics is tackled, although this remains the equivalent of almost a year.
- Some subjects, such as art and design and drama, are promoting literacy skills effectively. Students commented positively about the time they are spending reading before writing in many lessons. These strategies are more recent and are yet to show their full impact.
- Disabled students and those with special educational need are supported very well and make good progress. The adaptation of subject timetables for these students, in what the college calls the flexible learning zone, has benefited students. This, combined with the extra skilled staff who provide support to improve their communication and fluency in writing and reading, results in good progress.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress and this is an improvement on previous years where a more typical pattern of achievement is evident. Leaders are more incisive in judging student progress and providing better support to reduce variations in progress in targeted subjects. The proportions of students staying on to complete their final year are increasing, as are the numbers gaining a place at university.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Typically, teaching in most subjects is good. Students are very willing to work with their teachers and do their best.
- The best teaching was typified by high quality discussions that tested students' understanding, with an expectation that the students were to justify their explanations. Curiosity, stretch and challenge encouraged excellent attitudes to learning. In a Year 11 lesson, students confidently questioned each other about poetic devices used to convey the depth of passion in the poems by Robert Browning. In a Year 8 religious education lesson the students' fascination with the simplicity of a Buddhist monk's belongings sparked high quality discussion and a thirst to find

out more amongst the students. In both these lessons students made good, and for some of them outstanding, progress because subject knowledge was continually developed and the pace was demanding.

- Teaching is not outstanding because planning by some teachers in the mixed ability classes did not cater well enough for the different levels of ability. Teachers did not capitalise on students' highly positive attitudes to explore their thinking. In some lessons teachers settled for mediocre pace or the easy option when students were actually ready for harder work. While some students' work is presented with care and diligence, most notably in vocational and applied subjects, a few books include rushed or limited work and a lack of care.
- At its best, marking offers a good level of feedback for students through positive comments and by highlighting clearly what they need to do better. Not all teachers follow up marking by insisting that students improve an aspect of their work, for example by redrafting an answer or by re-doing a problem they found difficult or did not complete.
- Students know their targets and are complimentary about the extent of the opportunities to learn team skills, develop leadership capacity and oral skills in lessons. They consider they are well supported to improve through homework, but this is not regular enough in English.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers to support students who have special educational needs. They encourage these students to be independent, by asking them to 'have a go', before gently prompting them to use 'what you already know'. There are times when these strategies and those the students have learnt to help them with their reading and writing are not used by the class teachers. This slows the pace of their learning in these lessons.
- The high expectations of students in the sixth form, combined with regular checking of students' learning, ensure teachers intervene at the right time. Constructive and helpful feedback is evident in all sixth form lessons.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Students' outstanding behaviour reflects the college's high expectations. Students conduct themselves around the expansive college campus safely and sensibly. They require little prompting to be in lessons on time, even when this involves moving between sites. They respect the need for regular attendance and a neat and tidy appearance.
- Students adhere to the college's stringent behaviour policy. The excellent rapport between staff and students sustains their attention in lessons. Low-level disruption is extremely rare and it is unusual for students to be inattentive.
- The number of fixed-period exclusions is well below that found nationally. There is good support for the very few students in alternative provision to return to college full time. The onsite 'learning zone' makes a highly effective contribution to supporting these students to improve their behaviour, and their re-integration.
- The strong respect and thoughtful behaviour towards others and their willingness to reflect on experiences are excellent. This extends to their confident understanding of how to stay safe on social networking sites. Students are well attuned to the contemporary issues that face them.
- Students acquire a highly developed sense of respect and awareness for others, and they have a real willingness to get involved in charity fundraising. Sports and drama are a regular medium for their engagement in fundraising activities. They regularly contribute to collaborations with students in Spain, France, Argentina and South Africa through languages and joint projects. This contributes to developing their good understanding of global citizenship.
- The high level of attendance at clubs is made easier for students by adjusting college transport arrangements. The even attendance patterns by different socio-economic and ability groups reflect the drive to ensure equality of opportunity. These many and rich opportunities develop a sense of personal worth and raise the self-esteem of students.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher is passionate and unwavering about ensuring the best for all the students, both whilst at college and in their futures. He is extremely well supported by the senior leadership team and his governing body in driving forward an agenda that promotes aspiration, encourages ambition and ensures achievement. The Co-operative partnership with other schools, colleges, the Church, businesses and the University enhances the opportunities for all students.
  - The introduction of improvement plans, built around the three aims of aspiration, ambition and achievement, set a clear focus on improving students' outcomes and are transforming the work of the college. Subject and year group leaders have been energised by the opportunity to drive this agenda through greater involvement in tracking students' progress and target setting.
  - The college has a realistic and accurate assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Priorities set by subject leaders in subject action plans show coherence with the college's ambitions for all students.
  - The inclusive, cohesive learning community sets a very positive work ethic. Leaders have an active interest in educational research to help 'identify what works best' for students and this is having a good impact on improving the quality of teaching.
  - Students are fully committed through the student council to working with leaders to improve the college. They have worked with leaders to rewrite behaviour and anti-bullying policies that promote cooperation, community and social justice.
  - The response to the staff questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive about the college and its leadership. There is a palpable sense of pride among those who work and learn here. One comment reflects many others, 'It is both a privilege and a pleasure to work in this college.'
  - The school is using performance management effectively to reward performance that exceeds expectations. There is a strong approach to considering all evidence and teachers are in no doubt what they have to do to improve and move forward through the pay bands.
  - The academic and work-related courses for students are well matched to the different aspirations and abilities of the students. The school offers a rich and diverse range of extra-curricular trips and visits that raise cultural awareness and broaden students' experiences.
  - Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The college's strong partnership with Royal Naval Air Squadron Culdrose adds a further dimension to the appreciation of global awareness. However, there is acknowledgment that more work is needed to sustain and establish an awareness of multiculturalism and preparing students for life in communities very different from the south west of Cornwall.
  - Leadership in the sixth form is good. There is a determined drive for improvement and the sixth form is ambitious for its students. This is backed up by clear systems of monitoring, evaluation and accountability. This is leading to higher aspirations and improving standards.
  - The local authority has taken effective action to work with the college to develop leadership skills, particularly in monitoring and evaluating the impact of subject leaders on achievement and teaching.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors are forthright in challenging leaders to provide comprehensive information about teaching and achievement in each subject. The recently improved tracking and assessment systems are giving them a better understanding of progress across each year group. This has proved an important driver in focusing their attention on the achievement of groups as they move through the college and linking this to the quality of teaching.
    - Governors understand the college's performance management system and assess with leaders who should be rewarded and progress up the pay scale. They are not afraid to challenge the view of college leaders where subject performance is weaker, and are combining their own evaluations with independent consultants in order to gain a balanced view.
    - Governors have a good understanding of the headlines about achievement, and how this
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compares with schools nationally. They utilise this information to make sure that pupil premium funding is allocated to enable those students who require extra support to make good progress against national benchmarks. They have become increasingly demanding in their scrutiny of in-college gaps between middle ability and other students in Key Stage 3, and taken determined action to arrest this.

- Members of the governing body have excellent awareness of safeguarding young people, and fulfil their statutory duties in this regard.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112043
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	427281

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation Co-operative Trust
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,585
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	402
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Graham Vallender
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Patrick McGovern
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 November 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01326 572685
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