

Hele's Trust

Seymour Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 4LT

Inspection dates

12–13 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, supported well by senior leaders, has a clear vision for the school and has high expectations of staff and pupils. Senior leaders have improved the school significantly since the previous inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.
- Leaders have a clear, honest and objective understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- There is a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching. Senior leaders work effectively with middle leaders to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment meet the needs of pupils.
- Pupils in key stage 3 make good progress. This is because of the quality of teaching and assessment, particularly in humanities, mathematics and English.
- The curriculum is well suited to the needs and interests of the pupils. Pupils follow a broad range of appropriate academic subjects.
- Pupils behave well. They are courteous, polite and respectful. In lessons, most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Pupils speak positively about their school experience because they feel supported and valued.
- The governing body is effective. Governors are dedicated, know the school well and hold leaders to account.
- While teaching, learning and assessment are good overall, some pockets of weaker teaching remain, particularly in science.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very strong.
- Teachers sometimes do not have high expectations for high prior attaining disadvantaged pupils and work lacks challenge.
- Programmes of study in the sixth form meet the needs of students and support their future career pathways.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further by eliminating the remaining pockets of weak performance, particularly in science, and ensuring that pupils achieve as well in all subjects as they do in the best.
- Make sure that teachers set consistently high expectations, with high levels of challenge, for pupils' achievement, building on what pupils already know, understand and can do, particularly for high prior attaining disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are proud of what they have achieved but know there is more to do. Their plans for future improvement are focused on the right areas, are challenging and are achievable.
- Senior leaders articulate a clear vision of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment to staff. Having made their expectations clear, they work skilfully alongside their colleagues to support teachers in developing their skills.
- Senior leaders have a reliable and accurate understanding of the progress of every pupil because of the strong systems in place to track progress. The system extends from a whole-school level to each department and classroom. Leaders and teachers use this information well, rapidly intervening with pupils when they are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- The principal manages the performance of teachers well. She sets targets for staff which focus clearly on improving the quality of teaching and learning and improving pupils' outcomes. She reacts robustly and fairly when staff have not achieved the standards required.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is well designed so that it meets the needs of pupils. It is appropriately balanced, with a key focus on literacy. Leaders are working successfully to ensure that the raised expectations of the revised national curriculum are met.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enrich their school life. Pupils are appreciative of the clubs and societies that are available.
- Middle leaders are highly motivated and focused on improving the school because they feel empowered and supported. Subject leaders are accountable for the performance of their teams and are, in most cases, stepping up to the challenge well. Senior leaders' expectations of subject leaders have been raised. However, while most subject leaders are effective, there are a few areas where subject leaders are not yet completely competent in their role of ensuring the high quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Senior leaders are working alongside these leaders to strengthen the impact of their work.
- Middle leaders responsible for the pastoral system are working consistently to support pupils. They know the pupils well and intervene quickly and provide appropriate support to address pupils' barriers to success. Pupils are then able to catch up and make the progress of which they are capable. Senior leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. They deploy it to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Effective individual support is given to pupils who struggle to overcome barriers in their learning and this builds upon good-quality teaching in departments. Leaders monitor the use of funding closely and know the impact it is having for each pupil. The school also receives a small amount of catch-up funding for Year 7 pupils. This is used effectively to provide an extra-support programme. The

pupils who access this make good progress.

- Leaders make good use of the limited additional funds they receive to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress from their starting points as a result of well-coordinated provision in which pupils' needs are assessed.
- Sixth-form students operate a junior leadership team which works closely with the senior leadership team on school improvement. They carry out duties within the mainstream school and are developing the school council so that pupils in the mainstream school are able to contribute their views about the school.

Governance of the school

- School leaders are supported by a strong governing body. The chairperson of the governing body is very experienced and, with other governors, has ensured that the school has improved.
- Governors know the school very well. They ensure that they receive appropriate information and reports from senior staff to inform them of the school's performance and they are thus able to ask challenging questions and hold leaders to account. They visit regularly during the working day to broaden and deepen their understanding of the school.
- The governing body is working closely with the principal to prepare the school to be part of a multi-academy trust from September.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils are kept safe. They appreciate the strong safeguarding culture in place to protect pupils. Staff take their responsibilities very seriously. They are vigilant, well trained and know what to do if they become aware of a concern. All the proper checks are made on new appointments and volunteers. Governors oversee the safeguarding arrangements diligently.
- School leaders provide very good support for vulnerable pupils. They work well with local authority officers to ensure that pupils who face substantial personal challenges receive the support they need to make progress at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly since the previous inspection in 2015. However, not all teachers have high expectations of pupils. In the best practice seen, teachers expect pupils to think about the problem in front of them and make a considered response. In personal development, for example, pupils were discussing if people should be allowed to take their own lives.
- Teaching is aimed at the higher-ability pupils and lower-ability pupils are supported to achieve. This is proving to be effective, as all pupils are making progress.
- There are very strong assessment procedures in place. Consequently, teachers have a

good understanding of what pupils can and cannot do. Teachers adapt their teaching appropriately to address pupils' misconceptions.

- The quality of teaching in mathematics and English is strong. Historically, it has been weaker in English. This is now improving. Where progress in science is slower, it is usually the result of lower expectations and pupils being unclear how they can improve their work.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the needs of individual disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and provide additional support for them. Where the needs of these students have been taken into account, in planning and teaching, pupils make more progress.
- The most able pupils do not always make the progress expected. Although progress has improved, expectation and challenge need to be higher. Some teachers are now expecting more from the most able pupils than they did previously and they are responding positively to the challenge.
- When teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently, pupils tend to lose focus and make less progress. Leaders are aware of this and are working with teachers to ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately.
- The work in pupils' books is well presented. The majority of pupils take pride in their work, and this matches the attitudes to learning observed and progress seen.
- Pupils have a number of opportunities to use extended writing and reading, resulting in pupils' literacy skills being high. A whole-school approach to literacy is evident, particularly in the sixth form; however, this is not always consistently applied at key stage 3.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are taking an increasing pride in themselves, their uniform and their school. They enjoy coming to school smartly dressed and they enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils who are vulnerable or who are facing additional difficulties in their lives are given the extra support they need to allow them to continue to flourish. School staff work hard to raise pupils' self-esteem and with other agencies and parents to provide them with a safety net.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well, they listen carefully to teachers when they explain topics and they complete the tasks they are set. A few pupils, however, struggle to maintain concentration and these are appropriately sanctioned. These pupils consequently make less progress.
- The school is a courteous and tolerant community. Pupils understand the importance of fundamental British values. They listen to each other's views respectfully and are welcoming of the views of those different from themselves. They challenge and debate beliefs in a respectful and tolerant manner. They are polite to adults and visitors and treat each other with good humour.

- The school curriculum ensures that pupils receive a range of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Religious education lessons, assemblies, and personal development are all means that successfully develop this area of work.
- Teachers ensure that pupils know how to stay safe in the real and virtual worlds. There is a well-structured programme to remind pupils of the dangers present online. Pupils know what to do and who to go to if they have a concern.
- Bullying is infrequent but is usually dealt with effectively. Some pupils and parents are not always confident that they will be listened to by some staff or the incident resolved effectively.
- Pupils benefit from a well-constructed programme of careers education and guidance. They have opportunities to think and find out about career opportunities starting in Year 8 and building up each year.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Already, good behaviour has improved significantly with the new zero tolerance procedures. Leaders and teachers have insisted on higher standards of behaviour and, in the main, they have been successful. There are areas in which they have not yet been completely successful. This has led to an increase in exclusions.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons. They are punctual, listen attentively and want to engage in their lessons.
- Pupils behave well out of lessons, around the school site at breaktimes and at lunchtimes. They socialise well with their friends. They move around the campus in a calm, respectful and orderly fashion.
- Overall attendance has been above average but is now in line with the national average due to illness in the autumn term. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is average. Attendance remains a focus and a reward system for targeted pupils and parents is supporting improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils across the school are making good progress overall, particularly in key stage 3. There has been a marked improvement in the last year. Pupils of all abilities are doing equally well. No group is lagging behind in Years 7 and 8.
- Progress is generally good in most curriculum areas. There are a few subject areas, for example science, technology and information technology, where pupils do not yet make the same good progress as in other subjects. There is support and interactions in place to enable them to be as good as the best.
- Pupils are now making better progress in English. In the past, this has been a weaker area but improvements are now being made. However, some further development is required before pupils reach the consistency of work they achieve in mathematics. Progress in science is weaker; however, recent interventions are beginning to have a

positive impact.

- Pupils also make good progress in history, geography and mathematics as a result of the quality of teaching they receive.
- A small number of Year 7 pupils join the school needing to catch up in English. These pupils make accelerated progress, especially with their reading and writing, and so are soon able to get the most from their lessons.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in key stage 3 and narrowing the difference with other pupils in Year 10. This has been a success story for the school over the last year. They are now achieving results comparable with all pupils in the school. This contrasts with 2016, when they made very poor progress. Their success is the result of a carefully crafted tracking and intervention programme which has placed the progress of disadvantaged pupils at the heart of every classroom, meeting and action plan.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making improved progress from their starting points. This is the result of well-targeted support and intervention, so that teachers know exactly what pupils' needs are and how best to help them.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving compared to other high-attaining pupils in the school, particularly in Years 7 and 8 where there is no difference. At key stage 4, there is still a difference, although it is narrowing. This is an improvement since the 2016 results.
- Standards of literacy across the school are good. This is the result of a whole-school approach to reading and writing, with a focus on spelling and grammar.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students follow personalised study programmes that meet their needs and interests. This is because the design of the curriculum and quality of guidance that students receive enable them to choose suitable programmes. The courses students follow are also complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that broaden their interests and develop their employability skills. For example, the students are actively involved in peer activities within and outside their year groups.
- The number of students completing their courses and going on to higher education, employment and training is high due to the advice and guidance they receive, and students enjoy their courses and respond well to the teaching they receive.
- The new head of the sixth form has introduced significant, rigorous tracking systems to encourage early interventions for students not meeting expected grades.
- High aspirations are encouraged by a mentoring system in which adults in the school, and alumni, mentor students.
- Governors are also involved in the tracking of academic progress and have a strong grasp of the data.
- There are clear lines of accountability and demarcations of responsibility which support the students to achieve and be supported appropriately.

- Students' attitudes to learning reflect their high standards of behaviour, both within and outside the classroom. They were polite and enthusiastic about the new school building, support for them and the quality of the improved senior leadership.
- In view of the improvements in leadership and management, and in the quality of mentoring and the tracking of progress, with enhanced attention to curriculum choices, there is considerable evidence to support the school's own self-assessment of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Inspection findings support the current assessments made by the school. Some students attend courses on another consortium school site. This provides a more diverse mixture of opportunities to meet students' individual needs.
- There have been staffing issues in science which have impacted on student progress, but these have now been resolved.
- All students are entitled to work experience and many take the opportunity during the school's activity week. Some work in the main school, while others work in local establishments relating to the courses they are following.
- Attendance is a concern for some students and school leaders are aware of this and are taking appropriate action to resolve the situation.
- Students have a strong personal development programme that supports them on to their next career pathway.
- Careers advice is appropriate and students are encouraged into pathways suitable for their individual needs. Some students have found courses in the sixth form too arduous and have been assisted into apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	136557
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10033143

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1251
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carl Atkinson
Principal	Justine Mason
Telephone number	01752 337193
Website	www.heles.plymouth.sch.uk
Email address	heles.school@plymouth.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 April–1 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to become an academy in 2011. It was formerly known as Hele's School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the number supported by an education, health and care plan is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.

- More than 90% of pupils are of White British heritage. There are few from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of curriculum areas and across year groups. Many observations were jointly conducted with senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct entering and leaving the school premises, and at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's self-evaluation, governing body minutes, records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, and information on behaviour, attendance, exclusion and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Meetings were held with the principal and other senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of pupils, and representatives of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of 132 responses to the Parent View survey, 90 responses to the pupil survey and 67 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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Bill Houldsworth	Ofsted Inspector

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