

Inspection of a good school: Helston Community College

Church Hill, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 8NR

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 October 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Helston Community College is a large and inclusive school. Pupils are proud of their school and are happy to attend. They say they enjoy their lessons and feel well supported by their teachers to learn. Pupils and parents recognise and praise the hard work of teachers and leaders.

Pupils learn a broad range of subjects from Year 7. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study the same curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils can pursue a range of subjects based on their interests into key stage 4 and key stage 5. However, the expectations of what pupils know and remember are not routinely high enough.

Pupils are friendly and courteous. Most pupils behave well in lessons and are ready to learn. However, outside lessons their conduct is not as positive. Parents and pupils agree this is the case.

Bullying is rare. Most pupils feel confident that staff deal with incidents of bullying well. Pupils know where they can get help and support if they need it.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders ensure that pupils study a wide range of subjects from Year 7 to Year 9. This gives pupils a good foundation to make their choices for GCSE study. In key stage 4 and the sixth form, there is a range of vocational and academic courses to suit the needs and aspirations of all pupils. Leaders encourage pupils to choose courses that are part of the English Baccalaureate. However, most pupils do not. Despite leaders' actions, the number of pupils who study a modern foreign language beyond key stage 3 remains very low.

In most subject areas, subject leaders have outlined what they want pupils to learn and in what order. This ensures that pupils have the essential knowledge they need to learn more of the curriculum. Leaders' recent steps to improve the curriculum are paying off. However, pupils in Year 7 are often better prepared for their learning than pupils in the older years.

Teachers' assessments do not check what pupils know and remember well enough. As a result, teachers do not always have an accurate picture of what pupils understand already. So, in some cases, teaching does not challenge pupils enough. Some pupils find sequences of work too easy. Teachers do not always set out their expectations of what they want pupils to achieve. While many pupils work hard, some do not engage fully or complete their work to a good standard.

Leaders prioritise reading for pupils who need to catch up. However, staff's subject knowledge of the reading programme is not sufficiently strong. Staff do not deliver reading intervention as accurately and as well as they could.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) uses many strategies to identify pupils' needs. The SENCo and his team provide staff with appropriate information to support these pupils. As a result, these pupils learn well in most subjects.

Leaders ensure that there are a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports, music, drama and creative arts. However, not all pupils make use of these activities.

Leaders provide older pupils with the appropriate advice to make informed decisions about their next steps. However, some careers advice is too superficial. Leaders are currently working with subject leaders to strengthen the guidance and advice that younger pupils receive.

Parents and pupils shared concerns about poor behaviour, mainly out of lessons and around the school. They say that the 'link path' between the sites is a hot spot for poor behaviour. Leaders know this and are taking appropriate action to sort it out.

Staff are committed and feel proud to work at the school. They feel well supported by leaders, including with their workload. They welcome the ongoing training from within the trust to develop their knowledge further.

Governors and trustees know the school well and are supportive. They understand their responsibilities and duties. They meet with school leaders regularly to discuss the school's development. However, they do not always have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The systems used to give a clear overview are not strong enough. This prevents them from providing challenge to leaders and testing the impact of leader's actions.

In discussions with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that pupils' behaviour and teachers' use of assessment might serve as focuses for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders perform the necessary checks on staff. They ensure that all staff receive regular training. Staff are aware of the procedures for reporting concerns and use them well. Leaders work well with external agencies to keep vulnerable pupils safe from harm and make timely referrals when needed.

Pupils feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of risks. For example, they know how to stay safe online and about healthy relationships.

Leaders are taking swift action to improve site security and pupil supervision on this large site.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' strategic oversight of the school is not specific enough. Some Leaders are unable to evaluate the impact of their actions objectively. Leaders need to ensure that they are proactive in checking the impact of their actions. Governors and trustees must challenge and support the school to assure themselves that leaders are successful in improving the quality of education and pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Assessment is not used systematically and robustly enough. Some teachers do not adapt their teaching and provide adequate challenge over sequences of work for all pupils. Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely assess and identify what pupils know already and that any gaps in pupils' knowledge are acted upon.
- Teachers and leaders do not always have high expectations for pupils' conduct. Pupils' behaviour is not always positive. Leaders need to ensure that the school sets out high expectations and that all staff consistently apply these, so that all pupils demonstrate positive behaviour and conduct in and out lessons.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Helston Community College, to be good in November 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 143981 |
| Local authority | Cornwall |
| Inspection number | 10200921 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,364 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 209 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Kevin Thomas |
| Headteacher | Wayne Jenkins |
| Website | www.helston.cornwall.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Southerly Point Co-operative Multi-Academy Trust.
- This school uses four registered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and all other senior leaders. They met with the chief executive officer, chair of trustees and chair of governors.

- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, drama, music and geography. They visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with the subject leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. In addition, they met with pupils informally and formally to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered 120 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 68 free-text responses. They also looked at 354 responses to the pupil survey and 95 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Jen Gibbs, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Iain Freeland

Her Majesty's Inspector

Non Davies

Ofsted Inspector

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