

Inspection of a good school: Hele's School

Seymour Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 4LT

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 March 2023

Outcome

Hele's School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They have 'pride in the badge'. Pupils understand the high expectations leaders have for them. In lessons, they follow the routines and focus on their learning. Sixth-form students are role models to younger pupils. For example, they manage sports at breaktime for younger pupils to play.

Pupils are respectful. When bullying happens, there are different ways to report it. Pupils are confident that leaders deal with it effectively. Pupils know that abusive and derogatory language is not tolerated.

Hele's School has a considerable range of extra-curricular activities, which pupils appreciate and enjoy. A large number of pupils and sixth-form students join the Combined Cadet Force. They develop leadership skills, engage with the community and have a wide range of experiences. Many pupils participate in Ten Tors and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. School productions ensure that they are highly inclusive and have a high number of pupils participating. Pupils work with national theatre projects to develop their skills in theatre. There are clubs and activities covering a range of different interests. Leaders make sure there is something for everyone. As a result, pupils experience a broad range of opportunities.

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

Leaders are in the process of embedding a thoughtfully crafted curriculum. Working collaboratively across the trust, leaders have planned a well-sequenced curriculum. They have identified the detailed knowledge pupils will learn and when. Leaders have embedded the new curriculum in Year 7.

The curriculum is changing to a three-year key stage 3 programme. This means examination courses will start for pupils in Year 10. However, the changes mean Year 8 and Year 9 pupils are moving to a curriculum with new learning. As a result, pupils have

gaps in knowledge and skills where the curriculum learning and expectations are changing. Leaders understand this and are planning for it.

Despite the lower summer outcomes in key stage 4, the curriculum is broad and aspirational for all pupils. The ambition for a majority of pupils to study the English baccalaureate suite of subjects is high. A majority of pupils study at least one language at GCSE level. In the sixth form, students can select from a broad range of subjects. They are able to study subjects that allow them to follow their interests.

Teachers help pupils to remember their learning. Pupils recall and make connections with previous learning. In mathematics, for example, pupils see what new knowledge they will learn and how that builds on what they know. This gives pupils clarity to understand the purpose of what they are learning.

Staff know the pupils very well. Teachers track all their pupils carefully through a 'know your class' process. They make sure they plan for all pupils and consider the subject-specific support that will help. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. They receive the adaptation they need when they need it. Parents recognise the effective support and communication that is in place to support their children.

An ambitious wider reading curriculum has been introduced. Younger pupils read collectively in a reading tutor programme. Leaders have identified the reading needs of pupils in every year group. They provide intervention for those pupils in the early stages of reading.

The careers programme is carefully mapped from Year 7 to Year 13. Through a programme of careers fairs, work experience and interviews, pupils receive the guidance they need to inform the next stages of their education. Sixth-form students are well-supported in understanding their future choices, with a high number moving to higher education. Through the personal, social and health education curriculum, leaders have made sure that pupils learn about sex education and consent in a timely way. Pupils have many opportunities to develop skills as leaders, such as school council, junior leadership and library monitors. Through the Centre of Excellence programme, younger pupils complete challenging projects and attend lectures. Pupils with SEND are well represented among the pupils who choose to study Latin.

Leaders share and plan meticulously around every aspect of school improvement. Their vision is well understood by all. Parents are very positive about the school and the experience their children have. Staff report that leaders are considerate of their well-being. However, some of the work for improvement has led to increased workloads. Leaders are aware of this. Staff appreciate the collaboration with colleagues across the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. This means staff understand the local and national guidance in place to keep pupils safe. Staff understand the procedures in place in order to report concerns and use them appropriately. Leaders respond quickly with well-documented actions. As a result, pupils feel safe.

Leaders work with a range of external agencies to support pupils. Leaders plan for external specialists to provide support in school. Youth workers spend time with pupils during breaktimes and are a 'listening ear'. Pupils are confident to identify adults they can talk to and the different ways they can report their concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum for pupils in Years 8 and 9 is being restructured. As a result, some of these pupils have gaps in knowledge as they move to the new curriculum. Leaders need to ensure this is planned for and gaps in learning are addressed.
- Leaders' actions to develop a new curriculum have resulted in some staff experiencing increased workloads. Some staff find there is a challenging demand to their work. Leaders need to consider further how curriculum planning and workload can be managed proportionately.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2017.

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.

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

Unique reference number	136557
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10256743
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	1350
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
Principal	Justine Mason
Website	www.heles.plymouth.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 July 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hele's School is part of the Westcountry Schools Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and five unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the principal, members of the trust, the SENCo and other senior leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including school development plans and self-evaluation plans.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding policies and processes.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the pupil survey and the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gemma Tatlow

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Lovett

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023