

22 May 2015

Dear Parents and Carers

Hele's School Ofsted Report May 2015

As you are aware, Ofsted inspected Hele's School on 30th April and 1st May as part of their normal inspection schedule.

The report is available for parents to download from the 'school information' area of the school's website in advance of it being published on the Ofsted site later next week. Alternatively if you do not have internet access please contact the school if you would like a paper copy.

Whilst there is much to be pleased with in the report we are very disappointed that the overall judgement for the school is 'Requires Improvement'.

In 2014 English GCSE results overall were unexpectedly impacted by the collapse of a coursework unit of the 'English' GCSE. As a result the overall English GCSE progress fell below the national average. This means inspectors could not judge achievement, and therefore teaching and leadership as 'Good' overall.

The current inspection framework requires both maths *and* English progress to be 'Good' for the overall effectiveness of the school to be 'Good'. This is despite the maths and other GCSE's results being strong. Pupils' progress in other three English GCSEs (language, literature and media) was higher than the national average, and not a cause for concern. Inspectors confirmed that senior leaders accurately evaluate and know the school well - we were pleased that inspectors have said that all of the actions needing addressing in the previous inspection in 2012 have been achieved.

We have been working on improving literacy across the school for the last two years, with this impacting positively on the lower years, so that these pupils are now reading more widely and teachers are effectively teaching writing skills. However inspectors have said we have not made rapid enough progress in this area with pupils in year 9-11 and they have highlighted this area for further improvement.

There are two matters we need to focus on. Firstly getting more of the older pupils to read widely and regularly from quality books, and secondly for some to further improve the quality of their extended writing.

We are strengthening our action plan in the area of whole school literacy, and this will include all curriculum areas promoting wider reading, both of fiction and fact, and more opportunities for extended writing. We will be setting higher standards for the quality of written work generally so that we further improve comprehension skills, presentation and the ability to write for a purpose and for particular audiences.

Parents and carers can support this action plan by encouraging your children to read widely for pleasure, making sure that they have a wide range of books both factual and fiction to read. We will be exploring how to make literature more available to pupils as part of this work. In all other respects the school was found to be 'Good' or better, with many very positive comments.

Inspectors were particularly complimentary about the improvements in science, the quality of teaching generally in respect of the encouragement of independent thinking, and the improvements we have made in a wide range of curriculum subjects. In 2014 Hele's pupils made better progress than similar pupils nationally in 23 out of 30 GCSE subjects. This means that in most subjects achievement is 'Good'.

We have also worked hard over the last few years to increase the number of GCSE grades at A* to A. Ofsted have recognised we have achieved this in most subjects including English, maths and science, and more able students do as well or better than similar students nationally.

The Sixth form was judged 'Good' and inspectors highlighted several areas of outstanding practice - they recognised that strong leadership had tackled the issues identified in 2012, and that progress of Hele's pupils was better than similar pupils nationally and rapidly rising. We are delighted that the traditional strength of Hele's School - behaviour and the systems and relationships within our community that keep pupils safe were highly regarded; inspectors commented several times on how orderly and polite and smart the pupils were, and that pupils felt safe.

Inspectors also expressed a level of optimism in agreeing with senior leaders that the issues that need addressing have already been identified, improvements are already impacting and that with concerted effort across the school this area will be securely good within a short period of time.

We would like to take this opportunity to praise our pupils whose good behaviour has been recognised, and to thank staff who have worked so hard to crack every issue from the last inspection so securely, and Governors and yourselves for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mr A Birkett
Principal



Mr C Atkinson
Chair of Governors