

Wirral Hospitals School and Home Education Service Community Base

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105139
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377181
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Hilary Ward

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2-17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Catherine Griffiths
Headteacher	Derek Kitchin
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 14 lessons led by 14 different teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, with senior and middle leaders, a group of students, a parent and professionals from other agencies. The inspectors looked at documents relating to safeguarding, governance, school improvement planning, student progress and reviewed other aspects of the school's work. Inspectors analysed the responses on the 25 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and questionnaire responses from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well the curriculum engages students to improve attendance.
- The impact of the school's work to improve the quality of teaching and assessment on the raising of standards.
- The success of the school's strategies to involve parents and carers in their child's learning.
- The effectiveness of senior leadership's development planning in improving outcomes for students' learning and well-being.

Information about the school

Wirral Hospitals School currently offers part-time education to students aged 11-16 on its main campus base. Admissions are for young people with physical and mental health problems including anxiety, associated with social and communication difficulties and autism spectrum conditions, which have prevented them from being able to succeed in mainstream school settings. Many of the students have been out of school for considerable periods of time and are often in the later years of their schooling on admission. Additionally the governing body supports the provision of teaching to pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers in an on-site facility. Childcare for their babies is provided by the local Children's Centre in an attached crèche. The school also provides outreach in the form of individual tuition for 5-16 year-olds who are in-patients at Arrowse Park Hospital and teaching to small groups of pupils and students attending a Child Adolescent Mental Health Service Health/Education Assessment Unit.

The main campus is host to Wirral's Home Education Service with whom there is close liaison. However, this is a local authority provision, not managed or funded by the governing body of the school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. All students are White British.

The school holds a large number of awards including Careers Education Information and Guidance Award, Recognition of Quality Award for Work Related Learning and Experience, Leading from the Middle, International Schools Award, Eco Schools (Bronze) Award, Extended Services Award and has Healthy Schools status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school? 2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 2

Main findings

Wirral Hospital School is a good school which cares exceptionally well for its students. It provides a happy, safe and caring environment for young people who have often experienced failed placements in previous settings or whose health has prevented them from being able to attend school regularly. As a result, many students have large gaps in their skills and knowledge. This affects their attainment, which is generally well-below national expectations. Nevertheless, as a result of the good teaching, the majority make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their learning from their starting points when they join the school. However, teachers do not always assess students' work precisely enough to ensure that all individuals are challenged to achieve as much as they can in every lesson. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. The school constantly reviews its curriculum to match the needs and interests of the students to engage them in learning so that they want to attend school. The good curriculum is especially tailored to meet the needs of these students but its scope is restricted by the part-time nature of placements. The school is currently offering a fuller curriculum to Year 11 students whose health enables them to attend for longer periods of time.

As a result of the outstanding care, guidance and support, most students begin to develop coping skills they will need for their future lives. Partnerships with other schools and with agencies to promote the welfare of students are excellent. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the school gives particular priority to aspects of their spiritual and social development to build resilience. Parents and carers are extremely appreciative of the exceptional way the school helps and supports them and their children. Despite this, many of the students continue to find a school setting challenging and attendance remains well-below the national average for secondary schools. However, as a result of the excellent strategies the school has put in place, significant improvements in attendance have been achieved over the last year.

Senior leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, have high expectations for continued improvement in outcomes for students. Their self-evaluation is rigorous and they know the strengths and areas requiring development extremely well. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve rates of learning by:
 - setting more specific and challenging learning outcomes for individual students in lessons
 - assessing the learning of individual students more precisely to determine their next steps.

- Continue to seek ways to increase the amount of teaching time, where appropriate, to the welfare needs of individuals, to offer a more extensive curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment on entry varies considerably depending on their previous learning experiences and age at admission, and can be very different for cohorts year-on-year. However, it is usually well-below national expectations. By Year 11, the large majority of students have made good, and some have made outstanding, progress despite the fact that students attend on a part-time basis. Poor attendance, usually for health or mental health reasons, affects the rate of progress of a small minority. Students are achieving an increased range of GCSEs and other awards and last year almost all students obtained at least one GCSE. The overwhelming majority of students go onto further education, employment or training. A few students achieve full or partial reintegration into a mainstream school. For most, attending Wirral Hospital School is an achievement in itself following periods out of school.

Students enjoy their work and have very good attitudes to learning. They develop coping strategies and their excellent behaviour in lessons ensures that everyone can learn. Teachers' concern for student welfare means they are sometimes reluctant to challenge them to do difficult work and this can result in some individuals making less progress than they are capable of at times. In some of the best lessons seen, students researched topics for themselves on the excellent information and communication technology resources available in all classrooms.

Developing students' resourcefulness, resilience and independence underpins the work of the school and generally results in good improvements in their well-being. Students feel exceptionally safe in the nurturing environment of the school. Participation in physical education lessons or eating in front of other people can be a challenge but there is a good take-up of the sporting activities on offer and students have a good knowledge of healthy eating even if they are not always able to adopt the principles for themselves. In a food technology lesson, older students were comparing quantities of fats and sugars in different popular meals. One student commented that a particular meal was a, 'heart attack on a bun'. There are good opportunities for students to take on responsibility in school, including peer mentoring, bully-busters, school and eco council. Strategies such as telephone calls to parents and carers and to the students, home visits by the learning mentors and revised reward systems, have resulted in a 17% increase in attendance in the last

year. Together with the good progress students make in their learning and personal development they leave school well equipped for the next stage in their education, training or work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make lessons interesting by varying activities and by using the excellent technology and resources very well. They assess work thoroughly but learning objectives are sometimes too broad to determine an individual student's next steps precisely. Staff know students very well and this leads to lessons and exchanges that are full of warmth and good humour. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to encourage students to undertake work independently but they often require support to remain on task.

The good curriculum has been appropriately designed to meet the special needs of these students, with an emphasis on subjects to promote their personal development, including the skills they will need for their future lives. The focus is on learning the core skills of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology but the part-time nature of placements means that it is not possible to provide depth in all other subjects. The curriculum is designed with students to engage and interest them to want to come to school. For example, students were observed enjoying participation in mini-enterprise projects to make and sell Christmas toys and decorations. Where the school is unable to offer a subject of choice, arrangements may be made to support a student into another setting or to provide individual tuition. A range of extended school activities are provided, including a residential visit, which most students are supported to attend, and a holiday club, which helps to keep students engaged with the school during the long summer holiday.

The school is currently using some of its resources to provide additional teaching time to Year 11 students to support them towards accreditation at higher grades in

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

their examinations and to support their progress to successful transitions. Work-experience placements are organised for all students. Staff support them into a variety of settings which reflect their interests, such as an animal charity, insurance, aquarium and retail. For some students the school identifies that an internal work placement is more appropriate.

Relationships between all staff and students are exceptionally positive. The level of care is outstanding. Transitions into and out of the school are planned meticulously, usually in partnership with other agencies and with parents and carers, to try to ensure a successful experience for the young person. The school has been innovative in developing provisions such as 'Stepping Stones', an after-care service to provide on-going support to leavers to ensure the success of their next placements. Provision for 'Seedlings', the group of pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers, is excellent. It is tailored and flexible to meet their particular needs and to keep them involved in education. Similarly, tuition to pupils and students in hospital and in the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service assessment unit is focused on their individual needs at the time with an emphasis on developing basic skills or teaching subjects they may be taking for examinations.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Wirral Hospital School has made great strides forward recently under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. With the agreement of the governing body, the headteacher and senior leadership team have introduced a number of new initiatives. These include: a pilot project that extended provision to Year 5 and 6 pupils last year; the current provision of extended teaching time for Year 11 students; and 'after-care' for leavers. The governing body is fully involved in evaluating these projects and in making bids for funding. Members of the governing body have increased their skills and are extremely effective in challenging and supporting the school in improvement planning to extend provision and raise standards.

Arrangements for safeguarding the students, whose circumstances often make them vulnerable, are excellent. The school is a leader of best practice in this field, providing advice to other settings. Equality of opportunity is promoted with great effectiveness with every student having their individual needs met extremely well. The school's partnership with parents and carers and with a huge range of partner schools and children's services are outstanding in their quality and impact on the learning and well-being of students. The school is held in the highest regard by all its partners. The school is a very harmonious and cohesive community and the school is in the process of developing international links with other schools. To date it has not fully evaluated the impact of its work in this area.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over a third of parents and carers returned questionnaires. They were overwhelmingly positive in their praise for the school, what it does for their children and the support it provides for them. One parent raised a concern which was explored with the school in general terms to the satisfaction of the inspectors. There were many moving testimonies to the difference the school has made in the lives of students and their families. For example a parent said that, 'after a very difficult and traumatic period this school has been our saviour' and another, 'without this school we would not have known where to turn, our daughter has come on so much in confidence, education and so many other ways'. A few parents and carers felt that their children could now cope with a more full-time education and would like to see the additional offer in Year 11 extended down to those younger students who could manage this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wirral Hospitals School and Home Education Service Community Base to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 71 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	48	11	44	0	0	2	8
The school keeps my child safe	20	80	4	16	0	0	1	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	68	7	28	0	0	1	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	64	7	28	0	0	2	8
The teaching is good at this school	21	84	3	12	0	0	1	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	72	4	16	1	4	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	72	4	16	1	4	1	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	19	76	3	12	0	0	2	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	84	2	8	0	0	2	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	72	6	24	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	76	4	16	0	0	2	8
The school is led and managed effectively	20	80	4	16	0	0	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	84	2	8	0	0	2	8

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 November 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Wirral Hospitals School and Home Education Service
Community Base, Wirral CH41 0EZ**

My colleague and I enjoyed our visit to your school this week. Thank you for welcoming us into your classrooms and for being so willing to talk to us about what you were doing and learning. We think your school is a good school and would like to tell you about some of its strengths.

- You feel happy and very safe in school.
- Your parents and carers really appreciate the efforts the school makes to meet all your needs and the support it gives to them.
- The headteacher and his team have lots of plans for how to improve your education further.
- Staff listen to your views and those of your parents and carers and other professionals to make sure you are cared for exceptionally well.

To make things even better we have asked the school's leaders and teachers to:

- be very specific about what they want each one of you to learn in lessons so that they can assess your progress better to decide what you should learn next
- try to find ways to enable those of you who can cope with more of a full-time education to attend school for longer periods of time.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Ward
Lead inspector

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