

The Helix Education Centre

94 Uxbridge Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 6DH

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has successfully steered the centre through a period of change and a recent move to new high-quality accommodation.
- The re-structured senior leadership team is providing good support in raising achievement and improving teaching.
- The curriculum is matched well to pupils' learning needs. The numerous links with colleges and other providers greatly extend learning opportunities for pupils.
- Pupils' good achievement is reflected in the high proportion who are successfully reintegrated into mainstream schools.
- Teaching is good and the centre has improved the way it checks pupils' attainment and progress.
- The education service at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital is of good quality.
- Most pupils' behaviour improves significantly during their time at the centre. They develop positive relationships with the staff and feel safe.
- The centre has very close links with other agencies and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The local authority and management committee support and challenge senior leaders effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small minority of pupils do not attend regularly and this reduces the progress they make.
- On occasion, teachers do not provide enough challenge for more-able pupils.
- Teaching assistants are not all confident in supporting pupils' learning in mathematics.
- Information and communication technology resources are limited at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital base.
- Direct lines of communication between teachers at the centre and those in the colleges and other alternative provision are not well established.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed lessons at the centre and at the hospital school, and visited one of the colleges that some pupils attend for part of their time. This enabled the team to gather evidence about different aspects of teaching and learning.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the acting assistant headteacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator), the English and mathematics leaders, the family support worker and the transition support officers. Informal discussions took place with a number of other staff and with a small group of pupils. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Management Committee and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised parental evaluations of the education service at the hospital school. Inspectors also considered the 30 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documentation. This included the centre’s self-evaluation records and development plan; records of pupils’ attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance; and evidence of systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jackie Blount	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Helix Education Centre provides for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school or who have been out of school for reasons related to their behaviour. These pupils have often moved or had exclusions from more than one school. The pupil population changes throughout the year as the centre also provides short respite packages for pupils from local mainstream schools who are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- In addition, the centre runs an education service at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital for children and young people admitted as patients on a short-term, medium-term or recurring basis. These children remain on the roll of their home schools. It also provides home tuition for pupils who are unable to attend school because they are physically or mentally ill.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the centre receives pupil premium funding is above average.
- The centre does not receive Year 7 catch-up funding.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- All the pupils have special educational needs because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Many pupils at Key Stage 4 attend college or alternative provision for part of their time, often accessing courses that are not available at the centre or in mainstream schools. The amount of time they spend in other settings ranges between one and five days a week. The centre uses the following providers: Academus Alternative; Barnet College; The College of North West London; First Rung; Harrow College; Harrow Skills Centre; Middlesex ITEC; Red Balloon; and Uxbridge College.
- There have been significant staff changes since the last inspection. The centre now has a full complement of teaching staff and is covering just one teacher absence with a teacher supplied through an agency.
- The deputy headteacher took over the role of acting headteacher in September 2012 after the previous headteacher left, and his headship became permanent in January 2014. Since then, the senior leadership team has been restructured. A member of the existing staff has become acting assistant headteacher and a new assistant headteacher joined the school in September 2014.
- The centre moved from its previous premises to refurbished accommodation at the beginning of this term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement and build on existing strengths by:
 - tackling the irregular attendance of a small minority of pupils even more rigorously and looking for further ways of supporting those who are reluctant to attend
 - making sure that teachers always provide enough challenge for more-able pupils in lessons
 - increasing the skills of teaching assistants in supporting pupils' learning in mathematics
 - establishing direct lines of communication between teachers at the centre and the teaching staff at college and at the other alternative provision
 - improving information and communication technology resources at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital base to increase the range of learning opportunities available to pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has shown exceptional dedication and resilience in leading the centre successfully through a period of change. He has worked very closely with developers to achieve a rapid refurbishment of the current accommodation and has a clear vision for improving facilities further.
- The restructuring of the senior leadership team has increased the support for the headteacher and strengthened the centre's capacity to improve. Leaders are ambitious and staff morale is now high. This is helping to create a culture where teaching can flourish and where pupils are expected to behave appropriately. Senior leaders do not tolerate any form of discrimination and good relationships are promoted effectively.
- The headteacher has provided strong leadership for teaching and used the management of teachers' performance to reward effective practice and tackle underperformance. During a period of staffing changes, he has made sure that only effective teachers have been given permanent appointments and provided good support for staff.
- The new assistant headteacher is making a good contribution to the leadership of teaching and learning, and has already refined the way teachers use assessment information to plan their lessons. The acting assistant headteacher has contributed to stronger systems for checking pupils' attainment on entry, to the management of behaviour and is working to improve the way the school supports pupils' special educational needs. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and have good opportunities to contribute to improvements in their areas.
- Since the last inspection, the centre has improved the way it assesses and tracks pupils' progress. The appointment of a data manager has been a key development. It has enabled the centre to gather and analyse a wealth of information about pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.
- As a result of improvements in the management of pupil progress information, leaders are now better placed to ensure pupils are given equal opportunities and to identify those who need extra support. This has also helped in making decisions about the spending of pupil premium funding and in evaluating its impact. The funding is spent in various ways that are of benefit to the pupils both academically and personally. For example, it has been spent on training teaching assistants to provide speech and language therapy, to fund literacy support and to finance trips out for eligible pupils.
- The transition support officers are highly effective in managing and administering referrals to the centre, reintegration into mainstream and managed moves between schools. They have very good systems in place for matching programmes and placements to the needs of individual pupils, and communicate closely with parents, other agencies, mainstream schools, colleges and alternative providers.
- The hospital school is led and managed well. There are good systems in place for gathering information from mainstream schools and for tracking pupils' progress. Parents are full of praise for the contribution the service makes to their children's education, the way staff frequently go beyond the call of duty and support the whole family.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. At Key Stages 1 to 3, the main focus is on preparing pupils for reintegration into mainstream school and strengthening their literacy and numeracy skills. At Key Stage 4, pupils have the opportunity to take five GCSE subjects, vocational qualifications and to develop their functional skills.
- The use of part-time college placements and alternative providers greatly enhances pupils' learning opportunities at Key Stage 4. This extends the range of accredited courses available and provides very good opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work. Advice and careers guidance are carefully tailored to pupils' individual needs so that they are helped to make decisions that reflect their hopes for the future.
- The centre uses its primary sport funding effectively. It has established an after-school football club, providing equipment and training for staff, and funded sessions at the local leisure centre which have contributed to pupils' health and well-being.
- The curriculum is enriched by trips and involvement in special projects. These include a visit to The Crystal (a sustainable cities initiative in Greenwich), a trip to Charles Dickens' home and the Museum of London and learning in a woodland setting through a link with a local Forest School. Such activities contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The centre fosters positive relationships between pupils, tackles discrimination and encourages pupils to develop tolerance, including that required for life in modern British society.
- The centre's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. Thorough systems are in place for protecting pupils, and key workers have a detailed knowledge of the issues that affect each

pupil's life. There is excellent liaison with other agencies, and risks are assessed in detail for pupils who attend college and alternative provision.

- Leaders regularly check the attendance, progress and behaviour of pupils who spend some of their time off site. This provides a continuous record of how well a placement is working, but teachers at the centre do not have direct contact with the teaching staff in other settings pupils attend. This means that lessons on the days pupils spend at the centre cannot be planned to fit seamlessly with what pupils have been learning during the rest of the week.

■ The governance of the school:

- The local authority, in its governance role, has provided the centre with a good deal of support and challenge. The headteacher and other staff have worked well with local authority advisers in improving the quality of teaching, raising achievement and establishing improved management systems.
- The membership of the management committee has been strengthened by the addition of several headteacher representatives and a general increase in the level of expertise within the committee. The new Chair of the Management Committee visits the centre regularly and members are now providing increased support for senior leaders. They know how well pupils are achieving and receive a detailed breakdown of data from the headteacher, including that for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and how teachers' performance is managed and know that the best teaching is rewarded and underperformance tackled.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. With the exception of pupils at the hospital base, all pupils have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties which can give rise to some disruption, but in most lessons, pupils apply themselves well to the tasks they are given. Their books show that they often produce a good amount of work and there are instances where their engagement with learning is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes improve significantly over time and there was a marked decline in fixed-term exclusions over the last academic year. As pupils settle down and become established, the centre begins to turn their lives around and their behaviour becomes a model for new arrivals.
- The centre's success in improving pupils' behaviour is most evident in the high proportion of pupils who successfully return to mainstream school. The extent of the improvement in pupils' behaviour is evident in pupils successfully working alongside mainstream students on their college placements and in alternative provision. It is also evident in the fact that the centre is able to organise more educational visits in the knowledge that pupils know how to behave appropriately.
- There has been a significant improvement in the way behavioural incidents are recorded and tracked, so that leaders have a clearer overview of pupils' behaviour. The headteacher has driven improvement in systems for managing behaviour and has taken pupils' views into account. Pupils understand the system of sanctions and respond positively to rewards. In lessons, they eagerly watch to see how many marks they have gained for good behaviour and effort.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and they have good opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe. The centre matches its approach to the needs of primary and secondary-aged pupils when teaching them about using computers safely, and it makes sure that all pupils know about cyber-bullying. Sexual health and relationship advice is provided by a visiting nurse, and officers from the Metropolitan Police provide advice on safety in schools.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying. They say that there is 'no bullying' and that issues are dealt with straight away. Pupils develop trusting relationships with the staff and feel able to approach them for help and advice if they need it. Records indicate that there is occasional bullying but that it is handled promptly.
- Attendance levels have been gradually rising and most pupils attend regularly. The centre communicates closely with parents and other agencies to encourage pupils to attend. However, it is continuing to seek a solution to the small minority of pupils who are persistent non-attenders.

The quality of teaching is good

- The centre's own monitoring and that by the local authority suggest that teaching is good overall. Inspection findings, work in pupils' books and progress data indicate that teaching enables most pupils to achieve well.
- All pupils are now tested in English and mathematics when they join the centre and parents' views are frequently sought. The resulting information is used well to set individual targets and establish personal learning plans.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use information about what pupils can already do to plan lessons that provide the right amount of challenge. During the inspection, work was matched particularly well to pupils' learning needs in lessons in mathematics, media studies, religious education and science. In these lessons, teachers' expectations were high and pupils were motivated and engaged well with the activities.
- The teaching of reading, writing, communication and mathematics is effective. When planning their lessons in a range of subjects, teachers identify how activities will enable pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Throughout the centre, pupils have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. For instance, in a religious education lesson, pupils benefited from very good opportunities to discuss the Holocaust and they drew on their obvious interest in the topic. In a media studies activity, a teacher's excellent questioning pushed pupils to think deeply and answer in a precise way.
- Teaching at the hospital school is good. Teachers adapt activities to the needs of short-stay pupils. They have good systems in place for liaising with pupils' home schools so that work can be matched to the next steps in pupils' learning. However, lack of computer equipment and software limits the learning opportunities that staff are able to provide for pupils.
- Teachers marking provides pupils with encouragement and detailed information about what they could do to improve their work. At the end of all lessons, pupils are involved in evaluating how well they have done and thinking about their learning.
- Staff at the centre work with a wide range of therapists and other agencies to plan individual programmes for pupils which take their special educational needs into account. They also work closely with mainstream schools to support managed moves and reintegration into school following time at The Helix. During this process, staff share their skills and expertise with mainstream staff in how best to manage pupils with challenging behaviour.
- Individual support sessions at the centre help pupils with literacy difficulties to fill gaps in their learning and practice their reading and writing. In lessons, teaching assistants generally provide good support for pupils in literacy and help to support the management of their behaviour. However, not all teaching assistants are skilled in supporting pupils in mathematics. The mathematics leader has, rightly, identified the need to provide training so that teaching assistants can take on more responsibility for pupils' learning in mathematics lessons.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most pupils join the centre with attainment that is well below national expectations for their age because of a history of poor attendance, disrupted education and underachievement. They typically have negative attitudes to learning and some have been out of school for a significant period of time.
- Pupils who attend regularly usually make good progress, including those of minority ethnic heritage and pupils who speak English as an additional language. There are examples of some pupils making outstanding progress. This is due to gaps in their learning being filled, particularly in reading, writing, mathematics and communication. For example, pupils sometimes catch up so rapidly that in a few months they make as much progress as pupils would normally make over a number of years.
- Progress is good for pupils who spend only a short time at the centre and who follow an individualised learning programme aimed at returning them to mainstream school. The centre successfully returns almost all pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 to mainstream school. It also has a good success rate in enabling pupils in Year 9 to reintegrate. This is because it focuses on filling gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, and turning around their attitudes to learning.
- Through attendance for part of their time at college or on courses with other alternative providers, pupils at Key Stage 4 gain a range of vocational skills and are well prepared for the world of work. These placements give pupils access to a wider range of accredited courses and the proportion of qualifications

pupils gain at Key Stage 4 is increasing. As a result of the progress pupils make during their time at Key Stage 4, the very large majority go on to employment, training or further education when they leave at the end of Year 11.

- Although there are occasions in lessons where teachers do not challenge more-able pupils as much as they could, these pupils make good progress overall. For example, support by carefully selected home tutors has enabled individual pupils to gain as many as six A* to C grades at GCSE. Very occasionally, the centre enters individual pupils early for GCSE. This decision is only made when it will increase a more-able pupil's chances of gaining a range of qualifications. It has been of benefit to the pupils concerned. For example, after a history of underachievement, individual pupils have gained several A* to G grades at GCSE in Year 10 and then moved on to college for part of their time to study for further qualifications.
- The centre enables pupils who are admitted to hospital to make good progress and keep up with their learning despite time out of their home school. Younger pupils are able to keep up with their classmates and fill gaps in their learning in English and mathematics. Older pupils are enabled to continue with their GCSE coursework.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their classmates and there was no clear difference in 2014 between their achievement in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 and that of the rest of their class.
- Pupils all have special educational needs but those with additional learning difficulties tend to make better progress in English than in mathematics. This is largely because teaching assistants are more confident in supporting them in literacy than in numeracy.
- The irregular attendance of a small minority of pupils limits their achievement. The centre's records show that they generally make slower progress than the rest of the pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102180
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	447909

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Paa'King Maselino
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2011
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