

Royal Free Hospital Children's School

Pond Street, London NW3 2QG

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Teaching on both of the wards and in the classroom is never less than good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers and other adults provide well for the varying abilities of their pupils.
- Adults have high expectations of the pupils in both their academic achievement and personal skills.
- Teachers adapt each individual pupil's work to provide activities which are challenging but relevant to their stage of development and ability.
- The pupils make good progress as a result. From often very different starting points, the long-stay pupils achieve a good range of GCSE and Foundation Skills qualifications.
- Short-stay pupils on the wards, who may only stay in hospital for one or two days, make good progress in subjects which interest them.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, often reflected, for the older long-stay pupils, in worthwhile GCSE accreditation.
- The subjects the pupils learn have been adapted successfully to meet the learning needs of each individual.
- Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils feel safe and secure. Their behaviour is excellent. They attend as often as they feel well enough.
- The headteacher, working closely with other leaders, has made significant improvements since his appointment. He is well supported by his senior team. Together, they are effectively and consistently improving the standards of teaching and the pupils' achievement.
- Governors have a detailed and secure knowledge of the school's work. They provide a strong level of challenge and support to the school's leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to secure consistently outstanding progress.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and written comments by teachers on pupils' work. On some occasions, pupils are unsure how to improve their work.
- There is insufficient formal assessment of what pupils can achieve when they enter the school. This can slow down learning in the early stages of the pupils' time at the school since teachers take time to gain a full picture of each pupil's achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed the quality of teaching in five lessons in the classroom and on the wards. One of these was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with middle and senior leaders, a higher-level teaching assistant, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took into account the school's surveys of parents' opinions about the school. There was insufficient response to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be included. The inspector also took into account six returned staff questionnaires. Frequent informal discussions were held with pupils to explore their attitudes towards the school.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's own review of its performance and development planning. Records of pupils' progress, behaviour and well-being were checked as well as the school's monitoring reports on the quality of teaching and the range of subjects taught. Attendance records were checked, together with relevant policies, procedures and records relating to the safeguarding of the children.

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband

Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for the full-time education of a small number of secondary-aged, long-stay, day and hospitalised pupils. A varying number of short-stay, primary-aged pupils and some secondary-aged pupils are taught individually on the hospital wards on a day-by-day basis. They receive up to two hours tuition each day, depending on their physical condition. Many of these pupils in both primary and secondary phases only remain in hospital for a few days and return to their mainstream schools.
- The range of minority ethnic pupils, and of those who speak English as an additional language, varies considerably during the year, but overall is lower than average. There are currently no long-stay patients who speak English as an additional language.
- The school provides for pupils with medical conditions and longer-stay pupils with mental health difficulties including eating disorders. A very small number of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties are also provided for. Currently, there are no such pupils on roll.
- Long-stay secondary-aged pupils are taught in the classroom and also on the relevant wards.
- The proportion of long-stay pupils eligible for the additional government-funded pupil premium is about average, but because the number of pupils is so small, it is inappropriate to comment on their achievement. This funding is given to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- Pupils are admitted from Camden and a number of other local boroughs.
- The headteacher has been in post for just over one year. The deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that in marking pupils' work, teachers consistently and clearly indicate to pupils how they can improve their work.
- Establish a comprehensive check on pupils' ability and achievement when they enter the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has successfully created a very positive culture and ethos amongst school staff. Adults are without exception proud of their work and of the whole team spirit of cooperation in ensuring each pupil achieves well. There is high staff morale. As a result, there is a good capacity to maintain this improvement. Under the headteacher's leadership, the quality of teaching has significantly improved and with it, the achievement of pupils. Pupils on the wards and in the longer-stay provision are well taught, enjoy their work and make good progress.
- The senior team is new to the school but has already had a positive impact on standards of teaching. Middle leaders have received specific training to enable them to check effectively on standards in their subjects.
- The local authority has provided valuable support to the school.
- All aspects of teaching are rigorously and regularly monitored. Leaders are aware, for instance, of the occasional inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking and have established specific plans to improve this.
- There is robust management of teachers' performance, clearly linked to levels of pay which are carefully scrutinised and agreed by governors. Teachers work towards targets which are closely linked to the school's identified priorities for improvement. They are well supported by opportunities for further professional development. As a result, teaching continues to improve.
- Leaders maintain an increasingly effective overview of the academic and personal development of pupils. Relatively new strategies put in place by the headteacher to check and track the pupils' performance have proved very successful. Pupils achieve consistently well because any dip in their performance is quickly identified and intensive support provided. Excellent records are kept on the pupils on the wards despite them being in the provision for often very short periods. Pupils from all backgrounds, including the pupils who speak English as an additional language, achieve well. There is no discrimination and every pupil has an equal opportunity to do as well as possible. There is a culture of high expectations for all pupils.
- The school has used additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to provide extra individual tuition and to provide opportunities to visit and work at the Kentish Town City Farm. The pupils greatly enjoy these experiences, and their attitudes to school and their consequent achievement have benefited as a result. The school receives additional government sports funding for primary-aged pupils which it is using to develop its after school provision.
- The school's curriculum has been adapted successfully to take account of each pupil's needs and abilities. Longer-stay pupils have personalised learning plans leading to academic and personal targets which are tailored successfully to their needs. These targets incorporate challenging but realistic goals in English and mathematics and in personal and social skills. Older pupils have good opportunities to study a range of courses leading to GCSE accreditation. Every leaver last year, for instance, successfully moved on to higher-level college courses. Records since the previous inspection show that every pupil has progressed to further education or training.
- The curriculum has a significant impact on the pupils' enjoyment, behaviour and their achievement. The pupils' learning helps them to develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. There is an inclusive ethos at the school where every pupil is valued. Pupils take part in very regular 'collective time' to discuss and understand spiritual and moral issues. They have a good understanding, through visits and visitors to school, about tolerance and the dangers of extremism. They are well prepared to take their place in modern British society.
- Parents report that they have every confidence in the school's work and know that their children are safe and well cared for. Safeguarding procedures are very well organised and secure.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about the school's work and have a clear understanding of the pupils' achievement and well-being. They effectively scrutinise data about the pupils' performance in a range of areas, such as their academic progress, personal skills and attendance. Governors are well informed on the quality of teaching and how good performance is rewarded and any underperformance tackled. They check the use of additional funding and how effectively it has raised the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Governors have taken part in regular training, for instance in child protection and safeguarding. They ensure that current statutory safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils on the wards quickly become interested in learning new things and practising their skills. Longer-stay pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning. They work on individualised activities for long periods, with and without support, and maintain a high standard of mature and cooperative behaviour. This has a significant impact on their good achievement.
- Relationships are outstanding because the pupils know that adults support them as well as they can and have a deep interest in their progress. Each pupil is confident that they are recognised and valued as an individual. As a result, their behaviour is excellent at all times.
- Pupils are invariably respectful towards others. They display a great tolerance and sympathy towards others who may be experiencing physical or mental health problems. The school's records and the pupils confirm there is no bullying. The pupils have a good understanding of how to react if any bullying should occur, including how to deal with cyber-bullying or discrimination. Pupils are adamant, and records show, that there are very few incidents of less than outstanding behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Locked corridor doors secure the wards and the classroom, and the pupils have a very high level of supervision. The pupils are confident that there are always adults to turn to should they have a problem or become anxious.
- Older pupils take part in carefully supervised work experience when they are well enough. These pupils gain a very good understanding of how to keep safe in unfamiliar surroundings.
- All the pupils take part in regular activities in their personal, health and social education which teaches them how to manage any potential risks and to react maturely to common dangers, including drugs and substance abuse.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching throughout the school is invariably good, and sometimes outstanding. This is confirmed by the school's rigorous checking procedures. There have been consistent improvements since the previous inspection. All adults regularly update their skills through training and whole-school meetings to discuss individual pupils and their academic and personal development.
- Teachers have high expectations of the pupils' success and this contributes well to the progress of all pupils, including the disadvantaged and those who speak English as an additional language. Teachers on the wards quickly develop a good rapport with pupils who are ill and often tired, and ensure that while in hospital they make good progress.
- In the main classroom, there are pupils of all secondary ages. The pupils work on activities which are unique to them. There is always a great variety of work to suit all ages, and different levels of ability, as well as the differing demands of the curriculum in the different key stages, including well-organised use of information and communication technology.
- Each pupil receives a high level of support from well-trained teaching assistants. Teachers continually check on the progress of each pupil and challenge them to extend their understanding through questions and discussion. Adults are skilled in adapting learning to ensure pupils derive the most benefit from the lesson. As a result, pupils make good progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. Pupils read often and are challenged to analyse and discuss their reading. They develop good writing skills. The regular daily staff meetings, enable staff to discuss each pupil's progress and the best way forward which results in effective transfers of skills. For instance, mathematics teachers have successfully built on elements of number first learnt in science, to extend pupils' understanding.
- Pupils make an effective contribution to the assessment of their own work at the end of each lesson. This is discussed with their teacher and makes a good contribution to their progress since they gain a clear understanding of how to improve their work. On occasion, teachers do not mark written work consistently and do not give pupils sufficient advice on how to improve, particularly in terms of spelling and punctuation. Sometimes, therefore, pupils repeat the same mistakes.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The starting points of pupils are sometimes difficult to determine because the school does not have a reliable system of checking pupils' attainment when they enter the school. This can make it more difficult for teachers to set work at the correct level until they get to know the pupils' abilities more thoroughly. While some mainstream schools are able to provide up-to-date assessment information on individual pupils, this is not always the case. The school has recognised this area needs development and has very advanced plans to rectify this in the near future.
- Pupils, however, make good progress throughout the school. Pupils attend the school for varying amounts of time and can join the school at any time during the year. Teachers now maintain clear records of the pupils' progress and these confirm that almost every pupil makes the progress expected nationally. A growing proportion of pupils achieve above national expectations.
- The records of pupils' progress on the wards, even though they may only be in hospital for a short time, clearly show good progress from day to day.
- Longer-stay pupils who remain at the school for, at times, several months, or even a year, make good progress in each subject, particularly English and mathematics. This enables pupils in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to return successfully to their mainstream schools. A few pupils remain to complete GCSE examinations and coursework. Last year, all of these pupils successfully completed courses and achieved well, making good progress from when they entered the school. Their attainment varies considerably, depending on their ability and starting points, from lower grades in GCSE to a very few who achieved A and A* grades, especially in English and mathematics. Some pupils leave with up to seven GCSE passes. There is no early entry for GCSE.
- Disadvantaged pupils make very similar progress to other pupils. There is no gap in their performance. It would be inappropriate in this school to identify them since they are so few in number. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they receive a high level of appropriate support, linked carefully to their individual abilities and attainment.
- Where it is physically possible and appropriate for them, primary aged pupils enjoy the after school sports provision at the hospital school.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Good planning across a range of subjects encourages them to practise and reinforce these skills in a variety of contexts which adds to their achievement. This leads to examination success and ensures they are well prepared for the next stage in their education or training. The school maintains good links with mainstream schools to which most pupils return. This ensures there are no major gaps in the pupils' learning when they go back to their schools.

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	100094
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	447890

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Nicola Rogal
Headteacher	Alex Yates
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 January 2015
Telephone number	020 7472 6298
Fax number	020 7830 2302
Email address	head@royalfree.camden.sch.uk

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