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10 April 2017

Mrs Annalise Price-Thomas  
Headteacher  
Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service  
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Dear Mrs Price-Thomas

### **Short inspection of Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service**

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Andrew Buckton, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the service was judged to be outstanding in November 2012.

### **Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education since the last inspection.

You and your staff leave no stone unturned to ensure that you provide the very best quality of education and care for pupils. Your mantra, 'challenge and compassion', shines through. The expectation that pupils achieve high academic standards is skilfully managed around their treatment and recovery. Consequently, pupils thrive in this service and make excellent progress from their starting points, both in their academic and personal development.

Under your inspirational leadership, the extremely high-quality provision and outcomes for pupils have been sustained. The service remains forward looking, continuously seeking innovative ways to further improve. There is a total absence of complacency within the service. Staff know and understand pupils' needs exceptionally well. They very quickly build superb relationships with pupils and their families. Consequently, the gains pupils make are impressive. Pupils describe how they are happy and enjoy their learning. Indeed, pupils comment that they enjoy their learning so much that they often want to stay, one describing how the hospital school room is 'my best medicine'.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive and greatly appreciate the quality of education and care their child receives. They speak very highly of one-to-one support and the quality of classes in the centre and hospital school room. Comments such as 'life changing impact, my child came out and joined the world again', 'turning dreams into a reality, giving control back to our child' and 'I cannot praise the staff highly enough, my child has started to look to the future, an outstanding school' are typical of the responses received.

Staff share your total commitment, drive and determination to provide the best for each pupil. They benefit from the high-quality training, coaching and mentoring that you provide. As a result, staff are highly skilled in providing an education which exactly meets the needs of each pupil. Plans for improvement confirm a relentless drive for continuous improvement of this outstanding service with an unrelenting focus on further raising pupils' outcomes.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included how the school ensures that pupils are safe; the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring that pupils receive an effective standard of education; how teaching promotes good learning; the effectiveness of the curriculum in supporting pupils' academic, social and emotional development; and how you prepare pupils for returning to full-time education. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The nature of the provision means that all of the pupils in the service are vulnerable in a variety of ways. You and your staff consider the safeguarding of pupils to be of paramount importance. There is a strong culture of safety and security which permeates the service. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect each pupil from all possible risks. Staff receive effective training and regular updates on keeping pupils safe. Controversial issues are not avoided. For example, staff have undertaken training on child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Consequently, they are quickly able to spot concerns and take prompt action with confidence.

Leaders and the management committee fully understand the importance of recruiting safely. All staff are carefully vetted prior to starting employment to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

Risk assessments are in place for activities undertaken. These are regularly monitored and evaluated by leaders to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose. For example, staff work closely with medical professionals to ensure that activities planned will not hamper pupils' recovery either physically or emotionally. Furthermore, leaders work closely with a range of other external agencies with decisive action being taken when required to reduce risk to pupils and keep them safe.

Staff very quickly form strong and trusting relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils report that they are happy and feel safe during their time in the service. They

describe how staff look after them and support them in tackling any worries or concerns they have.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Policies and procedures take account of the latest statutory guidance and are strictly followed by staff.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders, including management committee members, are highly ambitious for the service. You are unwavering in your determination to ensure that the service continues to provide outstanding provision. You have exceptionally high expectations which are shared by your extremely skilled and motivated staff. You monitor the quality of provision with rigour, providing bespoke mentoring and coaching to staff coupled with well-considered and effective professional development.
- Development planning is detailed, clearly reflecting the service's accurate self-evaluation of its performance and drive for continuous improvement.
- The management committee has an impressive breadth and depth of experience and expertise which match well to the nature of the service you provide. This enables them to provide an impressive balance of high-quality support and rigorous challenge to effectively hold you and your leaders firmly to account. All who are involved in the service share your vision and your constant drive for further improvement.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently of a high quality. All staff know each pupil exceedingly well, irrespective of when they arrive. Careful attention is given to each individual pupil to ensure that activities planned are tailored to meet precisely their particular circumstances and needs. This enables pupils to learn well and thrive.
- Pupils' progress is carefully tracked lesson by lesson and day by day. Consequently, every aspect of each pupils' development enables teachers to be adaptable to ensure that individual needs are met exceptionally well.
- The only improvement point arising from the previous inspection was to develop learning opportunities that enable pupils with social, emotional or psychiatric problems to be taught in a group setting away from their own home. This you have tackled with creativity, flair and aplomb with impressive outcomes. For example, pupils are enthused with the opportunity to work with a series of resident authors through the project 'Beyond Words'. The impact of this work is impressive, reflected in the words of a professor of psychology as 'Beyond Words gives a voice to young people with mental or physical illness who struggle to attend school.' Pupils' work is collated in an anthology entitled 'Broken but mending'. As a result, pupils' confidence and resilience has soared, positively and significantly impacting on their mental well-being and academic progress.

- Pupils have access to a wide range of experiences organised by the service. Visiting speakers from a variety of cultures, backgrounds and professions inspire pupils and re-ignite their love of learning.
- Most able pupils, including the most-able disadvantaged, make substantial progress as they receive consistently high-quality teaching and are challenged to think deeply. For example, they are able to demonstrate their significant scientific knowledge and skills at local festivals, relishing the opportunity to meet and work alongside other pupils, challenging each other to produce impressive outcomes.
- The inclusivity of the initial referral process precisely establishes where pupils currently are and accurately identifies their individual needs. Pupils, parents and all relevant agencies are involved in this process which ensures that it is rigorous and sensitive. Challenging but realistic progress targets are set. However, these are not just about pupils' academic progress and gaining qualifications, but also their personal, social and emotional development, self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Throughout pupils' stay in the service, leaders work closely with parents, agencies and the pupils' mainstream school. This partnership work ensures that pupils' transition and future destinations are well managed and highly successful.
- Many pupils join classes in Year 11. Most of these pupils progress to an appropriate post-16 programme and achieve well. The very small number who do not find suitable places have circumstances that would make such a transition challenging. Nevertheless, you and your managers track each individual carefully, liaising closely with schools and colleges.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We met with you and your senior leadership team. Together, we talked about the improvements which have been made since the last inspection. We viewed learning, accompanied by a member of the management team, in the hospital school room and individual pupils' homes. We also held discussions with three members of the management committee, including the chair, met with an officer from the local authority and two medical professionals. Inspectors talked informally to pupils and also considered the 12 responses from the online pupil questionnaire.

A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the service's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. We also checked the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.

We spoke to parents during the day and also took into account the eight responses to the online survey 'Parent View' and considered additional comments received from parents. In addition, 21 responses to the staff questionnaire were considered.