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Alex Yates
Headteacher
Royal Free Hospital Children's School
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Dear Mr Yates

Short inspection of Royal Free Hospital Children's School

Following my visit to the school on 9 October 2018 with Mary Geddes, Ofsted Inspector, 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 school was judged to be good in February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

The hospital school operates from two sites and oversees a home education service. The Royal Free Hospital Children's School provides education for pupils who are not able to attend their mainstream school. The school provides education for those pupils currently in hospital through a ward service. Additional pupils attend the day classroom. These pupils are not able to attend school for medical reasons. All of these pupils are referred to the school by either a paediatrician or psychiatrist. You and your leadership team also oversee the running of the education at the Eating Disorder Service. Some of these pupils remain on the roll of their mainstream school and some are dual-registered. The hospital school has taken on the oversight of the home education service this term. This service makes provision for pupils who have illnesses which prevent them from attending school.

As headteacher you continue to oversee the development of the school since the last inspection, and have successfully managed to move the education provision of the Eating Disorder Service to a new site, minimising the disruption to the pupils' learning.

The leadership team, which consists of your deputy and you, provides effective leadership for all parts of the hospital school. Staff report feeling well supported. The positive and aspirational ethos you promote is visible on all sites.

The provision is well focused on the very specific needs of the pupils, including those pupils in need of inpatient care and pupils who attend on a daily basis. Pupils are very well supported to achieve positive outcomes in both their academic achievement and their social and emotional well-being. These aspects are specifically taught and celebrated.

A feature of your work that you are rightly proud of is the destinations pupils choose when leaving the school, with many returning to mainstream schools or colleges. Key workers support pupils in making choices about their future education provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is evident across all three settings. Leaders and the governing body have ensured that safeguarding systems and procedures are fit for purpose. Regular training for staff ensures that the well-being and safety of the pupils is paramount. Leaders make sure that all the required checks take place when recruiting staff.

Leaders are aware that the pupils attending all the school sites are particularly vulnerable. Individual cases are discussed with staff on a daily basis. On the ward, individual cases are discussed with all the agencies working with pupils.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look at how effectively leaders and staff support pupils to settle quickly and make a success of their time at the hospital school. This area was chosen as pupils at the school stay for varying lengths of time, some for very short periods.
- Staff make frequent contact with pupils' mainstream schools to support them settling well into the provision. Staff also support pupils well when they are able to return to their previous school. A pupil new to the school reported feeling very settled and was really pleased with the links with their mainstream school.
- Key workers know the pupils well and share their knowledge with all staff who come into contact with pupils regularly. This enables all staff to provide pupils with focused support in their learning activities.
- On the ward, staff quickly assess pupils' learning needs and choose activities which provide challenge.
- The second area we agreed to look at was to what extent leaders ensure that the curriculum is helping pupils to achieve well, taking into account their different needs and abilities. We chose this area as pupils stay at the school for different lengths of time. Some pupils stay for longer periods of time and take their qualifications while at the school.

- Staff engage very well with pupils when they start at the school to find out about their preferences and previous learning. They tailor the curriculum well to pupils' individual needs.
- All staff teach at least two subjects and the school draws on expertise from other schools to support a variety of subjects on offer. Staff demonstrate good subject knowledge. Pupils are offered a diverse curriculum matched to their ability and need. The wider curriculum provides further opportunities for pupils to develop social and life skills. However, the school is not able to offer all the subject choices it would like to, for example computing.
- Another area we looked at was the effectiveness of the school's processes and procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. This was an area identified for development during the previous inspection.
- The school has thorough procedures for understanding pupils' starting points when they are new to the school.
- There is a clear process for setting realistic and aspirational targets, which are rigorously tracked throughout the school year. These targets are both academic and for social and emotional well-being. Pupils are involved in assessing their own progress and this progress is regularly reported to parents.
- We also looked at how leaders engage with other schools and agencies to support best the children and young people. This is an area of work that the school is rightly proud of.
- Research practice is embedded in the work of the school and is often carried out in conjunction with disability-specific charities and medical professionals. This enhances pupils' learning.
- There are strong examples of focused multi-agency work. For example, 'huddles' are used to share practice of all the agencies in the hospital. These are meetings on wards at the beginning of the day attended by all professionals, including the school staff. This sharing of practice was also witnessed in the Eating Disorder Service and the day school. This supports pupils' access to learning activities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum offer is further extended and learning opportunities offered in as many subjects as possible, for example computing.

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

Yours sincerely

Penny Barratt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, teachers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority
- joint visits to classrooms with teachers, the headteacher and deputy headteacher
- scrutiny of the school's curriculum and assessment procedures
- a review of the school's analysis of attendance information
- a review of responses to Ofsted's questionnaires – including the parent, staff pupil questionnaires
- scrutiny of documents, including the school's development plan, safeguarding information and records, and data on pupils' achievement and attendance, the single central record and a review of safeguarding files.