

Huntercombe Hospital School Cotswold Spa

Station Road, Broadway, Worcestershire WR12 7DE

Inspection dates

3–5 July 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school meets the independent school standards in full.
- This school exists to serve a specific function: to ensure that pupils do not fall behind in their studies while they are patients at the hospital. It is highly effective at doing this.
- While they are here, pupils follow the curriculum of the school they attended, before being admitted to hospital. This means that each pupil is following a unique programme of study. Leaders manage this complex situation extremely effectively.
- Pupils do, indeed, keep up with their classmates back at school. The high-quality teaching they receive often helps pupils to make progress beyond that anticipated by their 'home' school.
- Pupils are highly positive about their experience at the school. They value the sense of normality that lessons bring as part of their recovery.
- The school sets its own curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE). This programme contributes well to pupils' preparation for being discharged from hospital.
- Pupils behave very well. They are courteous and respectful. They work extremely hard in lessons.
- The school is led and managed exceptionally well. The proprietor and head of education ensure that a focus on learning is paramount while pupils are in the school. The Huntercombe Hospital group holds them closely to account for that education being of high quality.
- Students in the sixth form continue with their A levels in line with the courses studied at their home schools or colleges. They make good progress and are well prepared to enter higher education. Students usually take A levels because this is what the home schools have requested. Leaders would like also to offer additional, vocational courses for students to request if they wish.
- Sixth-form students and younger pupils usually work in the same classroom. At times, this is not completely conducive to sixth-form study. Students need to be able to work alone more easily when it suits their needs.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consider ways in which the school can provide:
 - relevant, vocational courses to students who may wish to study them, if these have not been set by the home school or college
 - more ways in which sixth-form students can study separately from younger pupils if they wish to do so.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Staff are very proud to work at this school. They say it is a special place. They attribute its success to inspirational and highly supportive leadership. Staff say that, in this climate, they are able to give their very best to the pupils. As a result, pupils make very good progress in the often short time they attend the school.
- There is a unique purpose to the school's curriculum that, to a large extent, determines its structure. Each pupil is registered at two schools, this one and their home school. It is the home school which sets the required syllabus for its pupil in each subject. Consequently, there can be no single plan of content or sequence of learning for all pupils. Nevertheless, leaders manage this complex situation skilfully. They maintain oversight of the plans and adjust what they can to create coherence.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils to make as much progress as possible during their time at the school. They see good academic progress as an important part of pupils' recovery. Leaders keep a detailed record of each pupil's progress through their individual programme. They ensure that pupils learn what they need to successfully make the transition back to the home school when discharged from the hospital.
- The school has a distinct function within the hospital. It is a separate entity from the hospital but forms an integral part of the treatment of its patients. The proprietor and the school's leaders understand exactly what the school needs to do to fulfil its aims. They have relevant experience in education and know what is required to meet the independent school standards. They have made sure that the standards are met in full and that the school serves its purpose exceptionally well.
- The school is free to set its own curriculum for PSHE and for citizenship education. Leaders have set a broad programme that provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Since the previous inspection, a head of sixth form has been appointed. This move has brought a much sharper focus on the needs of sixth-form students. For example, the quality of careers guidance in the sixth form has improved notably. Further developments in sixth-form provision are planned.

Governance

- The hospital and leaders of the Huntercombe group of hospitals hold leaders closely to account for the quality of education and for pupils' well-being.
- The group maintains close financial oversight and provides resources as needed, to realise the vision and strategy set for the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- This is a school with a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils attend the school because they are inpatients at the hospital, which treats patients with mental health conditions

and, in particular, eating disorders. Staff monitor their safety and well-being meticulously.

- Staff assess the risk to pupils' physical and emotional safety before school each day and throughout the time they are present. They adjust lesson activities and the organisation of the day, as needed, to respond to pupils' emotional states.
- Procedures for managing safeguarding concerns are rooted within the hospital's systems. For example, staff seek advice from medical staff, or the hospital's social worker, if they have worries about a pupil. In this way, they ensure that help is immediate and effective.
- The school's procedures are set out in a safeguarding policy that considers current government requirements. The policy is on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils say that the teaching in the school gets the best out of them. This is because teachers allow them to work in ways that suit them on any particular day. Pupils' mental health conditions and the impact of their eating disorders make it difficult, at times, for them to concentrate. Teachers understand this and provide the flexibility pupils need to work at their own pace. This works for pupils. During their time at the school, they learn a lot.
- Teachers in the school work closely with pupils' home schools to create an individual learning plan for each one. This requires teachers to maintain oversight of each pupil's progress through their programme. They achieve this by keeping a close check on what pupils know and can do. This happens in a variety of ways. For example, during lessons, as pupils are completing their work, teachers question them carefully to test out their understanding.
- Every week, teachers discuss each pupil's progress with them. Between them, the teacher and pupil identify what has been learned and what needs to be revisited. In this way, teachers deliver the joint plans in effective sequences of lessons.
- Where two or more pupils are studying the same curriculum content at the same time, teachers deliver it to them in groups. This happens most often in compulsory subjects such as science and mathematics. Pupils particularly enjoy these lessons. They say that when the curriculum is delivered in this way, they 'cover a lot of ground'. This approach is not always possible. In some subjects, there is little common content for pupils of different ages or from different schools. In these subjects, pupils receive largely individual tuition. They understand the need for this. Both approaches lead to pupils making very good progress.
- Most subjects are taught by specialists. As a result, teachers have the knowledge they need to deliver the individual learning plans effectively. A new mathematics teacher is due to start at the school in September. In the interim, two senior staff are covering the subject. They have the knowledge needed to ensure that pupils make good progress. Therefore, pupils have not been unduly affected by the temporary lack of a specialist. Their views can be summed up by the comment, 'I've learned more maths since I've been here than in the last six months.'
- Teaching in the sixth form is of the same high quality as for younger pupils. However, the limited space in the school means that sixth-form pupils spend much of their time working in the room where key stage 3 and 4 lessons are taking place. This is rarely a problem.

However, occasionally, it is not conducive to the private-study nature of some sixth-form study. Students need, at times, to be able to work on their own, uninterrupted by discussions that are taking place around them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils attend this school because they are inpatients at the hospital, which specialises in treating young people with eating disorders. Their conditions mean that pupils are physically and emotionally frail. Staff are very sensitive to the fact. The school day is designed to educate them in an environment that aids their recovery.
- Staff consider pupils' welfare in all aspects of the school's work. For example, when planning lessons, staff consider any possible risks caused by the pupils' physical weakness or their vulnerability to self-harm. The timetable is set up to provide the flexibility to allow pupils alternative approaches to completing their work, when they are unable to focus.
- The calm, purposeful classroom environment helps pupils to concentrate. It means they can focus as much as possible on their studies. This brings the reassurance that comes with success. Pupils' confidence and self-belief improve as a result.
- Pupils speak appreciatively of the efforts teachers make to broaden their world view and to equip them for life in modern British society. There is a comprehensive programme for PSHE and for citizenship. In addition, teachers seize every chance they can to raise pupils' awareness of current affairs and issues that affect society.
- Pupils benefit from a highly personalised careers programme. From the moment they arrive at the school, they are encouraged to talk about their future plans. Staff go to great lengths to help them consider options and identify what support they might need. Pupils' medical and emotional conditions place limitations on their options for work experience. The school does all it can to organise appropriate visits and visitors from the world of further and higher education, employment and training to compensate for this.
- The small number of students in the sixth form and the limited space available mean that sixth formers spend much of their time working and socialising with younger pupils. This has benefits for both groups. However, there are some occasions when the sixth-form students would also benefit from having time away from younger pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils conduct themselves well and with dignity. They speak courteously to one another and respectfully to adults. For example, they talked politely to the inspector about their work, even though they were very keen to get on with it, uninterrupted.
- Pupils work extremely hard. They are diligent in completing tasks correctly and neatly. They seek guidance from teachers, listen carefully to teachers' comments and act thoughtfully on the advice received.
- Most pupils had low levels of attendance prior to joining the school. The nature of the

relationship between the school and the hospital means that pupils' attendance increases substantially, after they are admitted. Of the small number of absences, most are for positive reasons. For example, as pupils recover, they spend time at home prior to being fully discharged.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- The current pupils are all high attainers. However, their mental health conditions and eating disorders have resulted in most missing out on some or all of their education in recent years. In the short time they spend at the school, typically less than a year, they make up any lost ground and progress well through their individual learning plans.
- Since the school opened, pupils' examination results have shown that they at least maintain the progress anticipated by their home schools. Many have received grades beyond those the home school has targeted for them. Given the circumstances that bring them to the school, this is a substantial achievement.
- Pupils study a broad range of subjects to GCSE. They each study English, mathematics, three sciences, religious education, one or more additional humanities subjects and a minimum of one foreign language. This gives them a firm basis to make choices for future learning.
- In this setting, the next stage of education is the point at which pupils return to their home school. They have come to this school because they were unable to succeed at these original settings. Almost all return and achieve examination results beyond the home schools' original targets for them. In this way, the school prepares them exceptionally well for their next steps.
- The school communicates very well with home schools and colleges to support sixth-form students in their A-level studies. Most students achieve the highest three grades in their examinations.
- The school provides personal and highly effective support to students to apply for university places, and in identifying alternative paths. Almost all sixth-form students who have been at the school since it opened have gone on to study at degree level after they have left.
- Students who join the sixth form without strong GCSE passes in English and/or mathematics are well supported to retake these examinations and gain improved qualifications.
- The school does not provide vocational courses in the sixth form. This is, largely, because no students have requested these. However, leaders are seeking to broaden the school's offer so that future students who may wish to study for vocational qualifications would be able to do so.

School details

Unique reference number	142011
DfE registration number	885/6043
Inspection number	10093009

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Proprietor	Nicholas Rose
Headteacher	Catherine Woodsmith
Annual fees (day pupils)	£165 per day
Telephone number	01386 853 523
Website	https://huntercombe.com/centres/huntercombe-hospital-cotswold-spa/our-school/
Email address	catherine.woodsmith@huntercombe.com
Date of previous inspection	12–14 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Huntercombe Hospital Group. This is a group of private psychiatric hospitals that specialises in treating children and young adults with eating disorders.
- The school is registered as a school separately from the hospital but is situated within one of the hospital sites.
- The previous standard inspection was 12–14 April 2016.
- All pupils are inpatients at the hospital. Pupils are educated on the school's site full time.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils in lessons, looked at their work and talked to them about their learning and personal development.
- The inspector toured the school, met with school staff and scrutinised a range of documents to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector took account of the two responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the many cards and letters received by the school from past parents and pupils.
- The number of students in the sixth-form provision is very small. Therefore, the provision is not reported on separately in order to ensure that individuals are not identified.

Inspection team

Sandy Hayes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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