

Inspection of Elysium Healthcare Potters Bar Clinic School

Barnet Road, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 2SE

Inspection dates: 22–24 June 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils join Elysium Healthcare Potters Bar Clinic School having typically missed a good deal of formal education. All have significant social, emotional and mental health needs. All are valued and well cared for by staff. Leaders are, rightly, ambitious for every pupil. Staff build positive relationships with pupils, based on mutual respect. Pupils typically behave well. They correct their conduct quickly when prompted to and improve it over time. Classrooms are usually calm places to be. Pupils told us that bullying is very rare 'because we respect each other for who we are'. When it does happen, leaders sort it out swiftly.

The school has improved strongly over the last two years. Pupils feel safe because of leaders' changes. Teachers usually make sure that learning fills gaps in pupils' knowledge. This typically builds pupils' confidence and their willingness to attend more and learn more. Staff help pupils to get ready to return to school, or to go on to college, after they leave the hospital.

Pupils appreciate the efforts staff make to help them learn. A representative comment from one pupil noted 'I am a pupil, not a patient, when I am at school. Staff believe in me. They don't give up on me, so I don't give up on myself.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the previous standard inspection, leaders have made sure that the curriculum better fits the needs, interests and ambitions of individual pupils. The headteacher has made this a priority, so that learning prepares pupils for the next stage in their education when they leave. Together with the head of education, she checks that pupils are learning well. Staff respond to the headteacher's insistence on high standards. They support each other by sharing useful ideas and resources. The quality of education that pupils experience has improved very significantly.

When pupils first join the school, teachers assess what they do and do not know in each subject that they study. Staff use all available information to develop personalised curriculum plans for each pupil. Typically, these set out, in a logical order, what each pupil will learn. Teachers usually adapt these plans well to take account of what pupils have already learned. In a small number of subjects, new knowledge is taught in a less logical order. This limits pupils' ability to make connections between the things they learn. More training is needed to ensure that all teachers are skilled enough to teach different subjects expertly.

Teachers usually give clear explanations, and show pupils how to do new things, step by step. Teachers give pupils enough opportunities to practise new techniques, such as chord changes in music, or factorising equations in mathematics. This helps pupils to play a fluent guitar accompaniment to a song they have written, or to solve a mathematics problem, for example. Typically, pupils work hard and take a pride in their learning. They develop their knowledge and understanding well during their time at the school. This prepares them well for when they leave the hospital.

Teachers are generally quick to spot pupils' errors and gaps in their knowledge. They help to correct or close these before teaching new things. Sometimes, teachers' assessment of what pupils know is less precise. When this happens, teachers move pupils on to new learning before their knowledge is secure enough.

Staff are making a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. The curriculum enables pupils to develop an understanding of, and respect for, people with different backgrounds, lifestyles and beliefs. As one pupil told us, 'It doesn't matter whether you are gay, straight or transgender; everyone is accepted here.' Teachers develop pupils' ability to consider different points of view about controversial issues such as the criminal justice system, or extremist organisations. Pupils also play a part in the school community, such as by editing the school magazine, planning events, or helping make decisions about how the school is run. Pupils appreciate the independent careers advice that they receive, and support from teachers when preparing for interviews.

Sixth-form students benefit from the same personalised approach to learning as younger pupils do. Leaders ensure that students without qualifications in English and mathematics can work towards these. Teachers enable students to continue studying subjects they were learning previously. This means they do not fall behind by the time they leave the hospital. Teachers encourage students to research topics and complete pieces of extended academic writing about them. This helps prepare them for advanced level or undergraduate study. Students with specific career aspirations, such as teaching, or nursing, undertake relevant work experience. Leaders help pupils to apply for university.

The school now meets all the independent school standards. It complies with schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010. The school's safeguarding policy is published on its website, alongside other relevant information for parents and carers. Leaders and members of the management committee have a secure understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards. They have put systems and procedures in place to check that these are being met. The proprietor has commissioned external consultants to help support this work. Leaders identify any health and safety or safeguarding concerns swiftly. They act to deal with any issues. Pupils told us that they are well looked after and feel safe at school.

The proprietor and management committee meet with the headteacher regularly. They ask appropriate questions about all aspects of the school's work. Leaders advise the proprietor and the management committee of all serious incidents or safeguarding concerns and the response to these. As a result of this work, the proprietor and management committee have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are supporting and challenging leaders to raise standards in all aspects of the school's work. The school has the capacity to continue to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Since the previous full inspection, leaders have made many improvements to the school's safeguarding systems and culture. Leaders provide staff with regular safeguarding training, and check that all follow school policies and procedures. Leaders share any new safeguarding information about individuals quickly with all staff. Record-keeping is robust. This means all staff know pupils' individual needs and vulnerabilities. Hospital as well as school staff spot concerns about individual pupils quickly and pass these on. Leaders support pupils appropriately, working effectively with external agencies where necessary to keep them safe. Staff teach pupils about different risks. They personalise the curriculum, based upon their knowledge of pupils' individual vulnerabilities. This helps pupils develop the ability to make sensible choices.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school has done much to review and improve the quality of education, including in English and mathematics. However, the school's curriculum is not sufficiently coherently planned and sequenced in all subjects. Leaders need to make sure that the content of all curriculum plans is carefully ordered so that pupils' learning builds on what they already know and can do.
- Sometimes, teachers' assessment of pupils' work does not identify precisely enough which specific facts, methods or techniques pupils have not mastered. This means pupils are moved on to new learning when their knowledge is not secure enough. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers check carefully what pupils do and do not know so that new learning builds on secure foundations.
- The curriculum is taught effectively overall. Most teachers make sure that pupils build up their knowledge step by step and remember what they have learned. Leaders should ensure that training enables all teachers to understand the most effective techniques to use when teaching the subjects that they specialise in.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	145962
DfE registration number	919/6009
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10193485
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	9
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Mrs Kath Murphy
Headteacher	Miss Tara Stowe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,125
Telephone number	01707 858585
Website	www.elysiumhealthcare.co.uk
Email address	info@elysiumhealthcare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–21 March 2019

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend this school are patients at Potters Bar Clinic.
- Potters Bar Clinic provides child and adolescent mental health services tier 4, low secure services through the National Health Service, for children and young people with personality disorders and complex social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The proprietor for this school is also the proprietor for three other specialist schools: Rhodes Wood Hospital School, Brighton and Hove Clinic School and Cotswold Spa Hospital School. There is a head of education, who undertakes quality assurance work across all four schools.
- Following a pre-registration inspection in June 2018, the school was registered with the Department for Education (DfE) in July 2018. At that time, the school's registered name was Potters Bar Clinic School. The school provides full-time education to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some of the pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Admission to the school is via admission to the clinic. Pupils' places are funded by their local authority. The school is registered to take a maximum of 30 pupils from the age of 11 to 19 years.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school does not receive additional funding for disadvantaged pupils or Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Inspection history is as follows:
 - Ofsted conducted a pre-registration inspection of the school in June 2018.
 - The school received its full standard inspection in March 2019. The inspection judged that the school's overall effectiveness was inadequate. There were 10 unmet independent school standards.
 - Following the March 2019 inspection, the DfE required the proprietor to provide an action plan to highlight how unmet standards were going to be addressed. On 1 July 2019, the action plan was judged as acceptable.
 - Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection in October 2019, commissioned by the DfE. Five of the independent school standards were unmet.
 - The second evaluation of the school's action plan in February 2020, following the progress monitoring inspection in October 2019, deemed it not acceptable.
 - Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection in December 2020, commissioned by the DfE. All of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection were found to be met.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work across a variety of subjects. We undertook deep dives in English, mathematics, art, and personal, social and health education.
- We spoke with subject leaders, teachers and pupils about their work and about other aspects of life in the school.
- We toured the school with senior leaders to check that all the independent school standards relating to the premises were met.
- We met with the headteacher, senior leaders and members of the school's management committee. We looked at a range of documents, including all the required policies, information published for parents, leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, curriculum plans, and safeguarding, behaviour and attendance records.
- We held a telephone conversation with a representative from Hertfordshire local authority children's services.
- We looked at the 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the four responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire during this inspection. We also took account of information provided by the school about the views of pupils, and parents.
- The proprietor remains the same as at the March 2019 standard inspection. The proprietor met with us during this inspection.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Katherine Douglas

Her Majesty's Inspector

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