

Inspection of Rhodes Wood Hospital School

Shepherds Way, Brookmans Park, Hatfield AL9 6NN

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 June 2022

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| 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 | Good |
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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 come first in this school. Some pupils join after being out of full-time education for long periods of time. Pupils receive encouragement and support to continue with their studies. As a result, pupils settle quickly, rebuild their confidence and re-engage with their learning.

Pupils follow the school's routines and behave sensibly. Lessons proceed calmly because pupils are focussed on their work. Most pupils are keen to keep up with their studies. They want to be well prepared for when they transition back into mainstream school.

Pupils state that their teachers help them to learn effectively and they have no concerns about bullying. Pupils' specific needs mean that on occasions they can become anxious or agitated. Staff sort out any problems sensitively and without fuss.

Pupils have a say in what happens. Regular, planned meetings and questionnaires ensure that pupils have opportunities to meet with staff and share their ideas about what is going well. Pupils value this and feel listened to.

Parents praise the school and say that it has transformed their children's lives. They describe the school as a 'haven' and a 'lifeline' for their children. Parents appreciate the regular communication with staff that keeps them fully involved in their children's progress.

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

This hospital-based school successfully achieves its overarching aim to provide pupils with 'a safe place to succeed in every way'. Leaders make sure that pupils receive a well-designed and broad education that is based on the national curriculum. Pupils often arrive at short notice and stay for short periods of time. Because of this, the curriculum is designed to match pupils' home school whenever possible. Pupils, including older students in the sixth form, complete work set by their home school. Alongside this, leaders have developed comprehensive curriculum plans for all subjects so that the plans provided by the home school can be enhanced with Rhodes Wood's own teaching programmes.

Each pupil has a key teacher. They provide a valuable role in maintaining the connection with the home school while pupils are in hospital. Sometimes, when pupils arrive, there is a delay in key teachers receiving the curriculum content from the home school. Leaders do not follow this up quickly enough. While pupils continue to learn from the school's own curriculum plans, some pupils are waiting several weeks before they are back on track with their previous learning.

Teachers have high levels of subject expertise. This enables them to present information clearly and respond to pupils' questions and queries. They teach pupils

to use subject-specific vocabulary correctly. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding when they join the school and regularly thereafter. Teachers use this information to address any gaps or misunderstandings. Work in books shows that teachers encourage pupils to recall, recap and practise what they have learned. This supports pupils to deepen their understanding and go on to complete more challenging work. Pupils build on their learning successfully during their time at the school.

Typically, pupils join the school as confident and fluent readers. However, leaders still ensure that reading is promoted across all year groups. Pupils enjoy the weekly reading sessions, alongside the events that encourage them to read widely and often. Pupils talk positively about their favourite texts and authors.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils academically. Pupils are expected to work hard and try their best. Relationships are positive. Pupils respond well to staff and to each other because staff model how to always be respectful and kind. Pupils are happy to talk and discuss their work with their teachers.

The curriculum includes a well-planned programme for pupils' personal and social development. Leaders and staff make sure that pupils' knowledge of themselves, others and the wider world is developed effectively. Pupils learn about topics such as Black History Month and the importance of accepting people with different gender identities. Staff encourage pupils to discuss and debate current national and global issues. Pupils look forward to the range of enrichment activities that take place on Friday afternoons. All pupils plan and complete contributions for the annual school magazine.

Staff teach relationships and sex education sensitively, with due regard to legal requirements. Careers guidance is supported by an external adviser. Visitors from a variety of professions come to the school and talk with pupils. Staff provide specific support on completing applications and interviews.

Leaders make sure that staff are well supported. Staff receive training so that they are confident to teach pupils effectively and support pupils' specific needs. There is a strong sense of teamwork and cooperation throughout the school.

The proprietor body has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Governance is carried out by the management committee, some of whom have other roles within Elysium Healthcare Ltd. Members are committed to further improving the school. They bring a range of skills and expertise to the role. Members support and challenge leaders effectively in many important aspects of the school's work such as safeguarding and pupils' well-being. However, members do not challenge leaders as well and with the necessary rigour regarding the quality of education the school provides and how this enables all pupils to achieve well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take safeguarding very seriously. The safeguarding of pupils is fully embedded into all aspects of the school. Staff are well trained and watch out for any signs that a pupil may be at risk. Leaders document any safeguarding concerns diligently and check that procedures are followed correctly.

Leaders and staff work closely with hospital staff to identify and manage risks. They draw up risk assessments for each pupil, using information from several different professionals. Staff provide high levels of supervision. All incidents are recorded and followed up. Pupils' internet access is monitored and they do not have access to mobile phones in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some pupils wait too long to be taught from their home school's curriculum plans. Leaders need to ensure that teachers receive the correct curriculum information from home schools as a matter of urgency, so that all pupils can continue with their home school's learning programmes quickly.
- The management committee does not hold leaders to account well enough for the quality of education that pupils receive. Members need to develop a more structured and systematic approach to how they monitor and evaluate the impact of leaders' actions. Members need to assure themselves that the quality of education enables all pupils to learn successfully and achieve well.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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| Unique reference number | 144726 |
| DfE registration number | 919/6008 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10230316 |
| Type of school | Other Independent Special School |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 8 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 32 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 4 |
| Number of part-time pupils | None |
| Proprietor | Elysium Healthcare Limited |
| Chair | Kathryn Murphy |
| Headteacher | Michelle Fennell-Bergin |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £31,200 to £34,125 |
| Telephone number | 01707 655344 |
| Website | www.elysiumhealthcare.co.uk/education |
| Email address | rwhs@elysiumeducation.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 24 to 26 April 2018 |

Information about this school

- Rhodes Wood Hospital School is an independent special school. It is part of Elysium Healthcare Limited.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) relating to their medical conditions regarding eating disorders. This includes pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
- Admission to the school is via admission to the hospital. Pupils' places are funded by their local authority.
- Pupils are dual registered. They remain on the admission roll of their main school while being educated at the hospital school. Some pupils have missed considerable periods of education.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes linked to the wards that they live in. Pupils are inpatients at the hospital for different lengths of time. The typical length of stay is around 12 to 16 weeks.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The proprietor body for this school is also the proprietor body for four other specialist schools: Potters Bar Clinic School, Brighton and Hove Clinic School, Cotswold Spa Hospital School and Bere Clinic School.
- The name of the school's proprietor body is not listed on 'Get information about schools', the Department for Education's public record of schools' details. Additionally, the age range for the school is recorded as seven to 19 years.
- Inspection history: Ofsted conducted a pre-registration inspection on 18 July 2017. The school opened in September 2017. This is the school's second standard inspection. The first standard inspection took place from 24 to 26 April 2018. At that time, all the independent school standards were met and the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Inspectors held meetings with the several teachers and support staff to discuss the impact of the support they receive from leaders.

- The lead inspector met with four members of the management committee, including the head of education who undertakes a quality assurance role to the school. Additionally, the lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, mathematics and history. Inspectors met with curriculum leaders for these subjects, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. The lead inspector checked the curriculum provision and pupils' learning in other subject areas during the third day of the inspection.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally in lessons. One inspector visited pupils on the hospital ward.
- To check leaders' management of safeguarding, the lead inspector reviewed the single central record and records related to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding incidents. Inspectors considered the school's processes for reporting safeguarding concerns. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to check their views on safeguarding.
- The lead inspector toured the school with the headteacher to check that all the independent school standards relating to the premises were met.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including all the required policies, the school's own evaluation, improvement plans and minutes of the management committee meetings.
- Inspectors considered the eight responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the eight responses to Ofsted's free-text system. The lead inspector also spoke to some parents on the third day. Additionally, inspectors took account of the 12 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted Inspector

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