

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Children's Hospital School

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Leicester Royal Infirmary, Leicester, Leicestershire LE1 5WW

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023

Outcome

The Children's Hospital School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive an exceptional standard of education and care.

The school goes the extra mile to re-engage pupils successfully in learning. Staff show high levels of understanding and empathy towards pupils' social, emotional, and mental health needs. One parent reflected the views of other parents and carers when they stated: 'My child is thriving here and receives all of the support they need.'

Pupils receive a heart-felt welcome by staff each morning. Pupils look forward to coming to school. They enjoy their 'uplift' sessions when they get to share books with an adult, work in the garden and bake cakes in the café. Staff skilfully select these activities to enhance pupils' self-esteem and to develop their communication and interaction skills.

Each school site and every learning space has been carefully thought through. Pupils say that they feel calm, settled and safe. They can be themselves and are free from any harassment or discrimination. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exceptional.

Highly trained staff, including a well-resourced therapy team, support pupils to understand their emotions and anxieties. One pupil told inspectors: 'We learn how to accept ourselves and how to understand our feelings.'

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

There are high ambitions for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some pupils have already started accredited courses prior to their arrival at the school. When this happens, the school does everything possible to ensure that pupils continue with their accredited pathways. Many pupils leave with a range of qualifications, including GCSEs.

Staff accurately assess what pupils do and do not know on pupils' first admission to the school. They then use this to design a personalised, broad, and balanced curriculum, carefully. Over time, pupils make striking progress through the curriculum. This progress is also seen in their engagement in learning, self-esteem, communication and interaction.

The reading curriculum is well designed, ensuring that all pupils receive appropriate challenge and timely support. The school is determined to re-engage pupils in reading. Specialist drama staff bring stories to life. Staff foster strong relationships with pupils so that everyone enjoys reading quality books together.

Teachers are rigorous in their approach to identifying gaps in pupils' learning. They use this knowledge skilfully to provide tailored learning opportunities so these gaps in pupils' knowledge are quickly addressed.

The school does all that it can to ensure that pupils are prepared for their next stages of education and employment, including independent living. For example, post-16 students are supported to apply for jobs. They learn how to budget. The hospital-based provisions work closely with pupils' mainstream schools to mirror learning and ensure that pupils can return back when they are well enough.

The school is exceptionally calm and orderly. When pupils become anxious or withdrawn, they can play 'fetch the frisbee' and have 'cuddles' with 'Issy' and 'Tally', the two therapy dogs.

The school's approach to improving attendance, including getting pupils back into education quickly, is exemplary. The structure of the school day has been carefully designed to re-engage and enrich pupils' lives beyond the academic curriculum. As a result, they are keen to attend. Pupils enjoy learning outdoors and playing musical instruments. They engage in 'messy senses', which helps to build their resilience, confidence and trust in others. Some pupils participate in exhibitions and enjoy overnight stays to London. Pupils' talents are nurtured. For example, girls who enjoy football can take part in a 12-week coaching programme delivered in partnership with a local professional football club.

Through religious education studies, pupils learn about the beliefs of others. Pupils are taught to value and respect other people and consider views that might differ from their own. These opportunities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Highly trained education, health and therapy staff work well together. Research and reflective practice are a common feature of the school's training and development programme. This ensures that all staff provide exceptional support for all pupils.

There is an honest and open culture at the school. Staff appreciate the support and care they receive in relation to their well-being and their workload. The staff who work with the most vulnerable pupils, located on sites in a hospital, benefit from the clinical supervision on offer.

Those responsible for governance understand the school very well. They have ensured that the statutory responsibilities have been fulfilled. The school's improvement is prioritised well. This includes enhancing the school's mental health provision through the opening of the Magpie site and maintaining an aspirational and inclusive learning environment across the other three sites.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 2017.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	120363
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10254970
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lynne Folwell
Headteacher	Stephen Deadman
Website	www.childrenshospitalschool.leicester.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is split across four sites. The Children’s Hospital School at Leicester Royal Infirmary provides education to any child of school age during their time as an inpatient. Willow Bank School provides education for key stage 4 pupils who are unable to access education in their own school for medical reasons. Magpie Learning Centre provides education for pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4 who are unable to access education in their own school due to medical reasons. The Beacon CAMHS Unit at Glenfield Hospital provides access to education for any inpatients in key stage 3 to post-16 who have significant mental health needs.
- The school provides home tuition for primary and secondary pupils who are unable to attend their own school due to medical reasons.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no two-year-old children on roll at the school or any children in the early years foundation stage.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior and curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils as they visited classes and throughout the school day.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils reading aloud to members of school staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at the start of the school day, during breaktime, in lessons and as they moved around the school throughout the day. Inspectors spoke to leaders, staff and pupils about expectations of behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of the school's documentation, including self-evaluation and school improvement documentation, pupils' behaviour plans, attendance records, commissioning agreements, referral forms, individual learning plans, and records of behaviour incidents, including bullying.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the results of the staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with pupils and parents to gather their views.

Inspection team

Clive Lawrence, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Dave Gilkerson

His Majesty's Inspector

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