

Inspection of a good school: Devon Hospitals' Short Stay School

Schoolrooms, Bramble Unit, RD&E Hospital, Barrack Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 5DW

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

Outcome

Devon Hospitals' Short Stay School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Devon Hospitals' Short Stay School puts pupils at the heart of all it does. The school understands the importance of building relationships. Staff prioritise pupils feeling safe and having trust in the staff who work with them. Despite previously turbulent and negative experiences of school and, for some, ongoing medical treatment, pupils say they enjoy school. Pupils are motivated to learn. As a result, no matter how long pupils are at the school, they engage successfully with their education.

Pupils' education extends beyond the academic. It starts with their social and emotional needs. Staff understand each pupil's unique needs. This enables staff and pupils to work together towards overcoming barriers to learning successfully. Consequently, there are mutually respectful relationships. Pupils know what is expected of them and strive to meet these.

Parents and carers say they are kept well informed in all aspects of their child's education. A parent described the school as 'life-changing'. There is mutual agreement from parents that staff know the significance of small steps of progress and are skilled at building on these. Whether the learning is face to face or delivered remotely, the school's aspiration is for pupils to transition successfully back into full-time education once they are well enough.

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

The curriculum that pupils follow can come from different sources. These include their main school, this school, or a combination of these. Often, this is because a pupil has had significant time out of full-time education. The school ensures that, once a pupil starts, their education is bespoke and targeted to impact on their whole development. The school is ambitious for what pupils can achieve academically, socially and emotionally.

There is a requirement for provision to be designed to meet any pupil's needs, as this can change on a day-to-day basis. Staff are well prepared for this. They have the expertise to

adapt learning across the three school sites. However, there is a lack of consistency in some whole-school systems and processes. These provide an overview of how well pupils are learning and developing. Consequently, the school's oversight of pupils' education is not as efficient and informative as it could be. Examples of this include formats for recording initial and ongoing assessment information and expectations about how pupils' learning is recorded.

The school has designed a reading curriculum which supports pupils at the earliest stages of reading. In addition, the school has taken steps to strengthen the curriculum for older pupils who struggle with reading. There is a systematic approach to teaching phonics. The school understands the importance of reading as the key to a successful education. This is prioritised for all pupils when they start. Pupils have access to a wide range of texts. These are often used to increase pupils' awareness of diversity and issues that are relevant to them on an individual level, for example social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

In mathematics, teachers have the subject knowledge to adapt and scaffold learning successfully, no matter the phase a pupil is working at. However, there are missed opportunities to ensure that pupils have the important mathematical knowledge they need which underpins learning as it increases in complexity. Consequently, pupils do not build new learning on secure prior knowledge. They do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils gain a broad experience of wider opportunities that are available to them. This prepares them well for their next steps. The school capitalises on pupils' interests to engage them. Staff maximise on opportunities, where it is feasible, to get pupils out in their local area. Examples of this include using nature as a creative writing stimulus, access to an outside space at one of the hospital sites and links with local sports clubs. Pupils learn to keep themselves safe and be alert to risks in a way that is appropriate and relevant to them.

The management committee is secure in its knowledge of the school's strengths and the challenges faced by the changing context of the provision. Staff state that they feel privileged to work at the school, whichever site they are based at. They recognise that the support from the school ensures that there is a cohesive and connected staff team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The mathematics curriculum does not clearly identify the important knowledge that pupils need to know to support their learning, for example fluency and reasoning. As a result, pupils do not always develop these skills as successfully as they could. The school needs to strengthen the curriculum by ensuring that pupils secure the necessary prior knowledge in sequences of learning to support addressing the gaps that have

been identified. This will ensure that pupils remember more over time and successfully build towards more complex learning.

- There is not a consistent approach to some whole-school systems and processes. There is a wealth of information about pupils that is not always captured and measured as efficiently and usefully as possible. As a result, the school does not always have an accurate oversight of what is working well and what needs to be improved to ensure that pupils are learning as successfully as they should. The school should identify whole-school systems and processes that will strengthen their oversight and effectiveness of each pupil's bespoke education offer.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2012.

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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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	134859
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10288169
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	
Headteacher	Julia Allen
Website	www.devonhospitalschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school context has changed significantly since its last inspection. There are a greater number of pupils accessing the outreach provision and much smaller numbers accessing education on the hospital sites.
- Pupil referrals are made through the local authority medical inclusion team.
- The school caters for pupils who are dual-registered with their main school, with the exception of one pupil who is single-registered and accesses full-time education with the school.
- Pupils' needs vary and include complex and acute medical needs, autism, and social, emotional and mental health concerns. Some have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); of these, some have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school did not have any children in early years on roll during the inspection.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and subject leaders. In addition, an inspector met with members of the management committee, including the chair, the local authority strategic lead for inclusion and the school's school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons online and face to face, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. In addition, inspectors sampled individual pupils' work to gather evidence about the quality of education.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school sites.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement. Inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum, SEND, safeguarding and admissions.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents through records the school has kept and through telephone calls to some parents. There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors evaluated responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Leanne Thirlby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gill Hickling

Ofsted Inspector

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