

Inspection of North West Hospital School

100 Wilmslow Road, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 3DG

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 June 2024

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 attend this school because they are seriously ill and undergoing hospital treatment. The education that pupils receive forms an integral part of their recovery. It provides them with hope for the future. Many pupils told inspectors that their experience at this school contributes to improving their physical and mental health.

Pupils are welcomed into the school's safe and nurturing environment. Pupils build trusting relationships with their key adults. This helps them to regain their self-confidence.

Some pupils' health initially makes it very difficult for them to enjoy learning. Regardless of this, school staff work closely with clinical professionals to ensure that pupils are supported well. Pupils gradually increase the time that they spend in school.

Staff have the highest expectations of pupils. Regardless of the difficulties that pupils face, the school is determined to help them to re-engage with their education. Typically, pupils achieve well. They attain the qualifications that they need to successfully move on in their education once they are well enough to leave hospital.

Pupils develop strong bonds with each other. They behave well and typically get along together. This helps to ensure a calm learning environment. Pupils take part in a range of well-considered activities that develop their interests and talents.

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

Pupils join the school at different points of the year. Many have already missed a considerable portion of their education. The school uses a wide range of strategies to find out what pupils already know. Any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that pupils may have are identified quickly. Staff draw on a wealth of information about each pupil. They use this information to identify the most important learning for pupils. This flexible approach ensures that pupils, and students in the sixth form, benefit from an appropriate curriculum, regardless of how long they stay at the school.

Pupils who are likely to be in hospital for a longer time, or whose needs are more complex, build up to studying a broad and ambitious curriculum. This is well matched to their needs and to the key stage that they are in. At the start of their treatment, many pupils are too unwell to engage frequently with learning. Nevertheless, the school maintains its high expectations for these pupils. As their health begins to improve, so does their achievement. By the time that they leave hospital, many pupils have attained an impressive range of qualifications such as GCSEs, functional skills and A levels. They are well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

Staff deliver the curriculum skilfully. They have careful regard to pupils' SEND and health needs. Even though staff sometimes teach several age groups together, they are experts in selecting the most effective activities for each pupil. This helps pupils to learn well. Staff communicate closely with a wide range of clinicians, therapists and healthcare staff. This ensures that the education that pupils receive complements their wider medical treatment.

The school has recently prioritised reading for pleasure. As a result, pupils are reading more often than in the past. For example, pupils told inspectors that they were excited to take part in the school's reading challenge and hope to reach their goal of reading 100 books. Most pupils read fluently. A small number of pupils find reading more difficult. Staff have identified the reasons for this. However, the expertise needed to provide appropriate support to these pupils is limited. This reduces these pupils' access to the wider curriculum.

The school takes a sensitive approach to pupils' attendance. Some pupils' poor health prevents them from coming to lessons every day. For others, medical and therapy appointments are scheduled during lesson time. Inevitably, this leads to interrupted learning for some pupils. That said, there are also some pupils who choose not to engage with their lessons at times. This is especially the case for some students in the sixth form. Staff work well with these pupils to encourage them to take part in lessons more often. Most pupils make strong gains in their rates of attendance during their time at the school.

Some pupils have missing knowledge, whether this is because they have forgotten their prior learning, or because they have not attended lessons. Staff do not use effective strategies to identify and address these gaps in pupils' knowledge consistently well. This can sometimes mean that pupils' missing knowledge goes unnoticed. As a result, some pupils do not learn all that they should.

The school has a well-considered, comprehensive programme to support pupils' personal development. It is not possible for most pupils to leave the hospital ward, so staff provide creative opportunities for pupils to learn about the wider world. Staff also help pupils to engage positively with each other in a range of informal settings. For example, they encourage pupils to debate their views on current affairs respectfully and politely. Students in the sixth form take appropriate steps towards adulthood. For example, they prepare for their driving theory test. Staff provide individual careers programmes that help pupils to develop appropriate aspirations for their futures. This includes taking part in suitably adapted work experience.

The proprietor has ensured that the school has the expertise necessary to meet all of the independent school standards ('the standards') consistently. The school works closely with the hospitals to monitor the standards relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety. This joint approach helps to ensure that decisions about the premises and accommodation at the school are taken in the best interests of pupils.

The school's policies meet current statutory requirements and are available to parents and carers on the school's website. This includes an accessibility plan that fulfils the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The proprietor has a thorough grasp of the school's strengths and its priorities for further improvement. This has helped to ensure that recent changes in leadership have not hindered the quality of education that the school provides. Staff are well supported by the proprietor. Many staff told inspectors that their views are taken into account when the proprietor makes decisions that may impact on their workload. Staff are overwhelmingly proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's culture of safeguarding is strong. Staff are well trained and alert to any signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They work very closely with healthcare professionals and other external agencies to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support. Pupils trust the adults around them to help if they are in need.

The school and the hospital use different procedures for keeping records of any safeguarding concerns. Occasionally, staff are unsure which of these to use. While this does not leave pupils at risk, it makes it difficult for the proprietor to maintain full oversight of the safeguarding arrangements in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge because they do not attend school as often as their medical treatment allows. The school does not check this missed learning sufficiently well. This limits staff's ability to help pupils to catch up. The school should ensure that assessment strategies identify gaps in pupils' knowledge accurately, and that there are opportunities for staff to address these gaps. Alongside this, the school should continue to work closely with hospital staff to reduce the impact of pupils' medical absences on their learning.
- A small number of pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge do not receive the support that they need to catch up. They do not develop into accurate and fluent readers as quickly as they should, and this hinders their achievement in other subjects. The school should ensure that pupils who struggle with reading receive effective support so that they catch up quickly.
- Some information relating to safeguarding is not recorded in the most useful way. At times, a mismatch between school and hospital administrative systems makes it difficult for the school to join together important information about pupils' welfare and safety. This hinders the proprietor's oversight of safeguarding arrangements for pupils. The proprietor should ensure that the school's safeguarding records are clear and comprehensive.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	142524
DfE registration number	356/6006
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10322504
Type of school	Hospital school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Aspris Children's Services Ltd
Chair	John Anderson
Headteacher	Katie Mason
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,906
Telephone number	0161 4289511 ext. 5117
Website	www.aspriscs.co.uk/find-a-location/north-west-hospital-school/
Email address	northwesthospitalschool@aspriscs.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 to 5 December 2019

Information about this school

- This school operates from premises at two separate sites. One is located entirely within the Priory Hospital, Cheadle Royal, 100 Wilmslow Road, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 3DG. The school's second site is within the grounds of the Priory Hospital Altrincham, Rappax Road, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 0NU.
- The school provides education for pupils who are inpatients at the child and adolescent mental health units of the two hospitals. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. A large proportion have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils join the school throughout the year and attend for different lengths of time, determined by their medical treatment.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place from 3 to 5 December 2019.
- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has changed. The proprietor is Aspris Children's Services Ltd. The chair of the proprietor body is a director of the company.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2024.
- The school is registered with the DfE to admit up to 60 pupils. The school's capacity is currently reduced due to refurbishments at the hospital. At the time of the inspection, there were 23 pupils on roll.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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.

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

- 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, executive headteacher, senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector also spoke with the chief operating officer of the proprietor body by telephone.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of two local authorities by telephone. He also spoke with representatives of some of the mainstream schools that pupils have attended and expect to return to.

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to the standards and the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the checks that had been carried out on staff to ensure their suitability, 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 considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff. Additionally, the lead inspector spoke directly with a parent by telephone.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences at school and their views of behaviour and bullying. The nature of some pupils' additional needs meant that some of these conversations were facilitated by staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science and personal, social, health and economic education. They met leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. They also considered the curriculum across some other subjects and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school premises at both sites, accompanied by school and hospital staff.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kevin Sexton

Ofsted Inspector

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