



Mary Hare School



Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 110180
LEA West Berkshire

Inspection number 274872
Inspection dates 25-27 April 2005
Reporting inspector Anne Orton HMI

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

Type of School	Special	School address	Arlington Manor
School category	Non-maintained		Snelsmore Common
Age range of pupils	5 -19		Newbury
			Berkshire
			RG14 3BQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01635 244200
Number on roll	237	Fax number	01635 248019
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Hugh Ogus
Date of previous inspection	March 1999	Headteacher	Mr D A J Shaw

Age group	Published	Reference no.
5 -19	May 2005	274872

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Introduction

This inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in the consultation paper of February 2004. A special feature of this pilot was the joint inspection of both the school's education and boarding provision. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of all staff and governors of Mary Hare School.

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspection carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

Mary Hare School is a non-maintained mixed special school near Newbury for pupils aged 5-19 with severe and profound hearing loss. The mixed ability primary centre is on a separate site not far from the larger selective secondary department. Pupils do not move automatically between the two parts of the school, although around a third of Year 6 pupils transfer to the secondary each year. Pupils are admitted from all parts of the United Kingdom and overseas. All of the 237 pupils have a statement of special educational needs and nearly all take advantage of the school's age-appropriate boarding provision. The school has a small number of ethnic minority pupils and students. Their language needs do not differ from those of the other pupils. Mary Hare is a training school and will become a specialist special school in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Mary Hare is an excellent school. Pupils and students are happy, confident and have high levels of self-esteem. They achieve highly because of the skilled support and rich experiences they receive. Teaching is good overall with many outstanding features. Staff are very good at identifying the pupils' particular learning needs and nurturing their personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the school. They recognise and value the difference it makes to their children's lives and appreciate the school's considerable efforts to involve them despite distances and difficulties. The close links the school has developed with organisations and institutions which champion deaf education are particularly effective in supporting pupils' development within and beyond the confines of the school. Leaders in both the secondary and the primary departments are passionate in their belief that all deaf children can achieve highly and are very effective in realising this ambition. They are justly proud of their successes but are equally determined to secure further improvements. The school has an increasing capacity to achieve this. Since the last inspection, standards have continued to rise, the high quality of teaching has been maintained, the minor issues mentioned in the last report have been largely addressed and the school has been invited to become a specialist special school. It provides excellent value for money.

Grade: 1

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

The school has a very effective sixth form. Students choose it or remain at the school post-16, partly because they recognise and appreciate its outstanding academic reputation. Standards are very high. Nearly all students go on to higher education and to achieve further success. Last year, for example, all leavers gained university places, often at prestigious institutions. This is due to the exceptional quality of teaching which enables students to gain A level pass rates, often in excess of those achieved by similar schools catering for hearing pupils. The leadership of the sixth form is very strong. Despite the success of its students, it is honest and reflective in what it wants to achieve in the future and very clear about how this might be done. The sixth form has a strong inclusive ethos. Students with additional needs are supported exceptionally well and any barriers to their achievement are recognised and removed.

Grade: 1

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Overall the school complies well with the National Minimum Standards for boarding. Pupils and care staff have good relationships and routines. Expectations are clear, and there is a happy and relaxed atmosphere. The school has good links with parents. The pupils can contact their homes whenever they like, although the rules on the use of mobile telephones vary between different boarding houses. The senior staff responsible for boarding have a good understanding of the pupils' welfare. Pupils take responsibilities and their independence is fostered effectively.

Boarders are regularly consulted on issues of concern. Each year group has a key worker and staff have a good knowledge of individual pupils and their needs. Occasionally some of the care plans are not sufficiently linked to pupils' statements of special need and some logs of physical interventions or for incidents are not as detailed as they might be. The school has encouraged care staff involvement in the pupils' school work, such as during "prep" sessions. However, care staff are not always as fully briefed on the work of the school generally.

The quality of boarding accommodation is good overall, although some houses provide a significantly more homely environment than others. The supervision and mentoring of new care staff is limited where the heads of houses work on a different shift.

Since the last inspection, improvements have been seen in medical and recruitment records, training for the heads of houses, stability of care staff and staffing levels at the primary centre.

The link to the CSCI report will be available in about a month's time.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

To further develop what this effective school does well, it should:

- Continue to develop the role of the primary head ensuring that she has sufficient resources to play a full part in the strategic leadership of the school as a whole
- Rationalise the school improvement plan to ensure that key priorities are given sufficient prominence
- Address the minor recommendations outlined in the full report of the Commission for Social Care Inspection

Achievement and standards

Pupils at the school do outstandingly well, especially given their capabilities and starting points.

Children of all abilities enter the primary centre at varying ages. They often have very low language levels because of their deafness and sometimes their additional learning needs. Primary pupils make good progress overall and very good progress in their language and personal development. By the time they leave, pupils reach standards that are below the national average but this represents very good achievement in their language development. Higher attaining pupils reach average standards in some subjects. Each year two or three pupils transfer to the secondary school from the small primary centre. The exceptional progress of the older year groups is due to the successful foundations established in the primary department.

When the very bright pupils enter the secondary school they still have low language skills relative to most pupils of the same age. Their progress in language and literacy development is outstanding and provides the foundation for the excellent progress made in all other subjects. Results for pupils at 14 and 16 and of students in the sixth form are consistently above national averages.

The school effectively monitors progress made by individuals and there is no discernible difference between any groups of learners.

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being

The school is a lively community where relationships are based on high levels of respect. The pupils are welcoming and very well behaved. They are happy at school and attendance is very high, even for a boarding school. All pupils show a strong interest in learning. They approach work with enthusiasm and respond well to their teachers' high expectations.

Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and develop very good social skills. They appreciate the increasing diversity of their school. A range of festivals and other cultural traditions are enthusiastically celebrated in assemblies. Pupils are eager to contribute to the school community and make the most of their opportunities, taking on increasing amounts of responsibility. Older students act as mentors for younger pupils and sixth form prefects take responsibilities for various aspects of school life.

The School Council provides an appropriate forum for pupils' views to be expressed and is effective in identifying some areas for change. A wider range

of healthy food choices in the canteen is a result of their work. This has helped pupils to make good lifestyle decisions. The school acknowledges that the Council is not as fully involved in providing solutions for policy matters at the school and has plans to provide these opportunities. Pupils effectively organise events to benefit local and national charities as well as their own school. When they leave, pupils have a well-developed understanding of their own strengths and are well prepared for the world of work or for the next stage of education.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

All teachers have a consistent approach to teaching strategies, well matched to the needs of deaf children. Consistently good teaching across the school ensures that all pupils, including those with additional difficulties and disabilities, do well.

Teaching in the primary centre is good, and in the aspects of language work and personal development it is outstanding. Primary staff are very skilled at developing their pupils' language skills. In one lesson seen, two very young children were engaged in animated conversation about a dog they had seen scaring a cat; their discussion was unobtrusively guided by an adult who helped them to explain themselves clearly. Despite their hearing impairment, pupils of all ages make good gains in their oral communication skills because of the good teaching they receive.

Under the primary head's careful management staff are finding ways of continuing to improve their teaching strategies so that, for example, children are taught to use what they are learning in literacy and mathematics more effectively when they work on other subjects. Parents are delighted with their children's steady progress and feel that they are kept very well informed about their targets and what they need to learn next. The primary staff assess and record children's learning systematically. Whilst this is a thorough approach it has some drawbacks because it is a time-consuming paper based system and staff cannot easily track the progress of particular groups. This is more efficiently realised in the secondary school where staff have greater access to information technology.

In the secondary school, teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and a strong awareness of individual needs. In the best lessons seen, staff made expert use of visual images to strengthen pupils' understanding of the ideas being covered and develop their speaking skills, as was observed in a lively class discussion on the merits of the New Deal. On rare occasions, some

teachers didn't involve pupils as effectively and teacher talk over-dominated the lesson.

Secondary staff work as a team and do all they can to create and sustain excellent relationships. Adults are friendly, encouraging and very consistent in their manner and approach. They offer praise and advice where it is due, very effectively helping all groups of pupils to take appropriate steps in developing their language. As a result, pupils are confident learners and not afraid to use their voices at every opportunity as in a very effective Year 10 French lesson where pupils discussed with some skill how they might ask for petrol or have a breakdown repaired.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The primary curriculum is good. Teachers' plans are clear and cater effectively for children's individual needs; staff are careful to plan a broad range of additional activities and outings which enrich the children's learning. In addition, a well-established partnership with Falkland Primary School provides excellent opportunities for children to participate in weekly games and physical education and classes in science and information and communication technology.

The secondary curriculum also offers a vibrant range of subjects and options. The school promotes citizenship and cultural education well, notably in music, art and physical education; and through extra curricular events. Sometimes even international opportunities are made available. For example, some sixth formers participated in a recent photography trip to New York which culminated in a well-reviewed exhibition of their work.

The oldest pupils and students personal interests and aptitudes are catered for well. Across the school, provision for personal, social and health education and religious studies is particularly rich. Staff have a very successful approach to encouraging pupils to develop a healthy, active lifestyle, and to minimising risks and staying safe. Pupils choose to spend time out of doors at break times and after school, and readily take advantage of the many physical activities on offer.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

The needs of every pupil and student are placed at the heart of the school's work; it provides an outstanding level of care, guidance and support.

All pupils know who to talk to if they are worried or upset and can also discuss any concerns with independent listeners. Pupils spoke warmly of the care they receive in the boarding houses and how they feel safe and well-looked after. Child protection procedures are known and understood and staff are now in the process of updating their training.

Teachers set regular homework "prep" which pupils diligently complete either at home or before returning to their boarding houses. Extensive advice is provided to pupils and students as they decide on their options or approach work experience. A diverse range of interesting placements is made available. The school is very successful in providing pupils and students with employment opportunities which will interest and challenge them; some of the companies and agencies involved in these schemes include major banking companies, government and local authority departments such as the Treasury and the Fire Brigade.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

Leadership and management at Mary Hare School are outstanding. The principal, the head of the primary school and the senior management team have a shared passion and commitment to improving the life chances not only of their own pupils and students but those of all deaf children. Until very recently, the leadership of Mary Hare had extensive responsibilities beyond the school. For example, the school is a leading national trainer for teachers of the deaf. Around half the teachers in Britain achieving mandatory qualifications for teaching the deaf receive their training at the school. Mary Hare is also at the forefront of research into technology to support hearing impaired pupils and has extensive sound workshops located on site. Yet despite these additional responsibilities, the leadership and management have led significant school improvements and maintained the high standards.

The governing body has recognised extra burdens are not appropriate in the longer term and has arranged for some responsibilities to be devolved to others, allowing the principal and the senior management team to focus on the school's core purpose. Their self-evaluation is effective; senior managers know the school's strengths and are honest about the developments still required. For example, they want to involve the headteacher of the primary centre more fully in whole school matters and intend to bring together the plans for the many initiatives and developments currently being undertaken.

Monitoring and evaluation activities are also effective. Consistency and commonality is achieved; managers ensure that provision is tailored to the different ages and needs of the pupils and students and that their environment is safe. Performance management is strong: teaching strengths are shared widely through the school's training role. The school has ambitious plans to further develop the skills of new and existing teachers through peer observation and targeted training. Resources are well managed and excellent value for money is achieved. There are outstanding links with agencies and institutions supporting deaf education and with those who can provide the pupils with wider opportunities and experiences.

Governance of the school is outstanding. The governing body and its supporting committees have a strong strategic oversight and appropriate accountability arrangements. The governors are active in promoting school development. For example, they are considering what further opportunities may be available to secure even more effective educational opportunities for those primary pupils who do not transfer to the secondary school.

Grade: 1

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INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16-19
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	*1	*1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	*N/A	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Y	Y
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Y	Y

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve?	*1	1
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	*1	
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

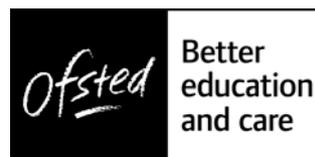
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	*2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	*1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	*1	1
How well does the provision promote the well-being of learners?	*1	1

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	*1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Y	

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	Yes/No/NA
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Y
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Y
Learners are taught about sexual health risks	Y
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Y
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe.	Yes/No/NA
Procedures for Child Protection meet the requirements of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i>	Y
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Y
How well learners enjoy and achieve	Yes/No/NA
Support is given to learners with poor behaviour and attendance	Y
Learners' personal and academic development are monitored	Y
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	Yes/No/NA
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Y
Learners, individually and collectively, are consulted when key decisions affecting them have to be made and their views are listened to	Y
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Y
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	Yes/No/NA
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Y
Learners have opportunities to develop their enterprise and financial skills, and work in teams	Y
Education and training for all learners in 14-19 is co-ordinated to give experience of work based learning	Y

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Mary Hare School
Arlington Manor
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Newbury
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RG14 3BG

27th April 2005

Dear pupils and students

The inspection team really enjoyed their visit to your school and seeing your wonderful work. We were made to feel very welcome; we appreciated your smiles and offers of help. We would like to thank all of you, but particularly the groups of pupils who talked to us and the School Council who allowed us to see them in action.

This is what we found out about your school:

- You all work hard in your lessons and make very good progress in what you learn and in how you behave
- This is because you have good teachers, care staff and other adults to make you feel at home, even if you are a long way from your families. We even thought the way you help each other was just like one big family.
- We thought you had a very good principal and the other senior staff. They try to make sure you get all the opportunities you need and work hard with others to give you extra support even when you leave school

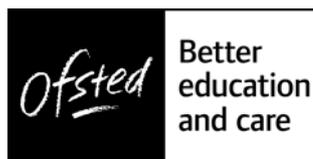
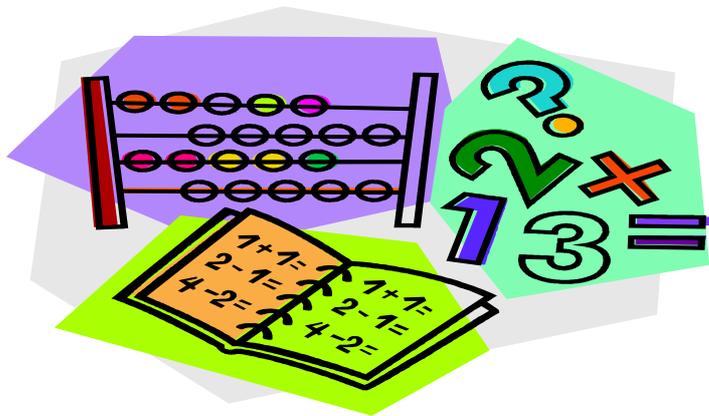
Even though we thought your school was exceptionally good, we asked your Principal to continue to improve two small areas.

- We think some of the senior teachers are very busy. They have very good ideas and need a bit more time to work with the Principal. We also think they may be planning to do some things too quickly. We want them to be able to concentrate on the really important things first.
- We think that some of your care staff need more time to talk with their managers so they are able to help you even more.

Can you try to help the school to put these things right?

We hope you agree with us. Thank you again for all your help

The inspection team



Mary Hare Primary Centre
Mill Hall
Pigeons Farm Road
Thatcham
Newbury
Berkshire RG19 8XA

29 April 2005

Dear Children,

Thank you for letting me come to visit Mary Hare Primary Centre. I had a wonderful time with you all and think you have a very happy school. It is like one big happy family.

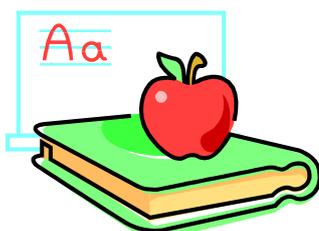
What I like most about Mary Hare Primary Centre:

- ✓ you all look after each other, are kind and thoughtful and behave very well indeed*
- ✓ you work very hard and are doing really well especially in developing your language*
- ✓ your teachers and the adults who help you work hard too, and try to make you feel at home even if you are a long way from your families*
- ✓ I think you have a marvellous head who does everything she can to make sure that you get all the support you need even when you go to your new schools.*

What I have asked your head and the principal of Mary Hare Grammar School to think about:

- your head has some good ideas but she is very busy and needs some more time to work with the principal so that she can concentrate on the really important things.*

I hope that you will carry on helping your teachers and the adults in your school.



Thank you and best wishes from your visitor.