



Oxfordshire Hospital School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123337
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292636
Inspection date 24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Margaret Goodchild

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre Headington Oxford OX3 7LD
School category	Community special	Telephone number	01865 737259
Age range of pupils	4-18	Fax number	01865 737259
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair	Mrs Theresa Davey
Number on roll (school)	42	Headteacher	Mr Barry Jackson
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school provides education for pupils in four hospitals across Oxfordshire. These include acute psychiatric cases at the Highfield Adolescent Unit, specialist and general cases at the newly opened Oxford Children's Hospital and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre in Oxford, and those with medical conditions at the Horton Hospital in Banbury. The school is subject to ongoing changes: two sites recently closed and the Oxford Children's Hospital opened less than a fortnight ago. This has led to movement of staff and pupils and a reduction in the number of teachers. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school spans a very wide range, being broadly average overall, but many pupils have a history of underachievement as a result of interrupted patterns of education through illness. Most general cases are short stay, with some regular re-admissions, whereas psychiatric cases tend to be long stay.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Parents are highly appreciative of the school's work. As one said, and;quot;The staff are wonderfully encouraging and get a good balance between understanding the children's condition and getting the best out of themand;quot;. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.

Pupils achieve well and there are examples of outstanding progress in some areas, particularly by pupils with psychiatric difficulties. Standards are average overall, with wide variation between high attaining pupils who perform well above average to others with learning difficulties and disabilities whose work is well below average. Teaching is good and the curriculum is matched well to pupils' needs, with a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education and citizenship. Work has begun in revising curriculum planning following the reduction from six sites to four but not all aspects of the curriculum have been planned in sufficient detail yet. An outstanding range of visits and visitors enriches pupils' learning, contributing a great deal to their academic progress and personal development.

Pupils are cared for and supported exceptionally well. Staff show a high level of sensitivity to pupils' personal and emotional needs, working exceptionally well with the multi-professional teams at each site and with pupils' home schools. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. For those with general medical conditions, learning takes their minds temporarily off the trauma of their illness, and pupils with psychiatric conditions embrace the opportunity to explore and express their feelings.

The school is led and managed well. The major changes, with a reduction from six sites to four and the very recent opening of the Oxford Children's Hospital, have been managed effectively. Senior managers collect a significant amount of information about the school's effectiveness and are accurate in judging how well the school is doing. However, the way monitoring information is analysed and used to arrive at priorities for development lacks focus and precision. The school development plan does not, therefore, drive school improvement or lead to the identification of staff training needs as well as it should. Governors make a good contribution to the school's work and are actively involved as partners in decision making.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen priorities in the school development plan so that it provides a clear focus for school improvement and supports the precise identification of staff training needs.
- Ensure the curriculum is planned in detail in all subjects to meet the range of needs at each site.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils with psychiatric conditions, who tend to be the most able in the school, achieve well and produce some very high quality work, particularly in English. They have, for instance, written highly expressive poems and lengthy pieces of writing that are lucid in expressing the way they feel. The small number of pupils who took their GCSEs at the end of Year 11 in 2006 met with a good level of success in gaining A* to C grades.

The work of pupils with general medical conditions spans a wider range of attainment. These pupils make good progress overall through the learning opportunities provided at their bedside or in the hospital school classrooms. Where work is closely matched to their learning needs, for instance, where their home schools have identified gaps in their knowledge and skills, and where teachers' expectations are high, these pupils make outstanding progress within individual sessions. Occasionally, when teaching does not make clear what pupils are meant to gain from an activity and where the support provided is encouraging rather than challenging, progress is satisfactory.

Pupils have met with a high level of success in art and their work has exhibited in high profile locations such as the Ashmolean Museum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils and parents alike say that the school makes a tremendous difference to the way they cope with being in hospital, often in pain, facing surgery or recovering from treatment. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the staff, clearly enjoy the activities provided, and behave extremely well. Pupils with medical conditions often became fully absorbed in activities and those with psychiatric problems find the confidence to explore and express their deepest feelings. Work on display shows that pupils apply themselves very well and try hard despite their conditions. They enjoy the work they do, especially when it is creative, and are very positive about the activities on offer. The exceptional opportunities provided for pupils, such as going on trips into Oxford and working with visiting specialists, leads to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils find out about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and quickly feel safe and able to trust the staff. Some who have been subject to bullying in their home schools come to a deeper understanding about how to cope with and avoid this. Pupils contribute actively to decision making and the school supports them in making their voices heard. The good progress that pupils make contributes well to their future well-being and time spent in the school strengthens their resolve in the face of physical and emotional suffering.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Staff show a high level of commitment to the pupils and they are highly skilled in quickly establishing a rapport with pupils and their parents, and in motivating pupils so that they want to learn. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects that they teach and in the best teaching, they use probing questioning to make pupils think. Staff engage pupils' interest well and, overall, work is matched effectively to the needs of the wide range of different ages and abilities. On a few occasions, pupils could be challenged a bit more through teachers being clearer about what they hope pupils will gain from an activity.

The school has developed good systems for identifying pupils' learning needs and assessing their attainment. Teachers keep effective records about the progress that pupils have made. Where long-stay pupils or those with chronic or recurring conditions attend the school on a number of occasions, staff work hard to get up-to-date information from their home schools, including their individual education plans.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is matched well to the needs and interests of the pupils. For longer stay pupils, learning opportunities are based around work provided by their home schools. In addition, the school places particular emphasis on personal, social and health education and citizenship, which includes ample opportunity for pupils to reach a deeper understanding about their illnesses. The promotion of pupils' literacy skills and the wide range of creative experiences provided are also particularly strong. The recent introduction of a topic approach, where links are forged between subjects, is an effective way of planning for the wide range of needs and ages. The school has recently begun to revise and develop a range of plans and materials to meet the needs of pupils with a range of conditions: this is not yet fully in place.

The school makes outstanding use of the local community to enrich pupils' learning, welcoming a large number of visitors, such as writers, artists and musicians to work with the pupils, and regularly taking pupils out, for instance, to local museums and galleries. This contributes significantly to their achievement and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has thorough systems for ensuring that pupils are protected and that risks are avoided. Parents comment on how the kindness of the staff, the activities and one-to-one or small group work lift their children's spirits and make a stressful time bearable and often enjoyable. Staff are highly skilled in quickly establishing trust in the pupils, so that they feel safe. Staff

provide a great deal of encouragement and, where necessary, readily provide counselling and emotional support to pupils and parents. The school works very closely with medical staff and with the other agencies involved in supporting pupils through their illness. Pupils are involved closely in decisions about their academic targets and when they leave hospital, staff liaise very closely with their home schools and with other services to aid their successful reintegration. The teacher at the Horton base provides valuable support also to pupils in the local community who are too sick to attend school regularly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Senior managers provide outstanding direction in relation to pupils' personal development and in the way they use the community to enrich pupils' learning. This is a particularly outstanding feature of leadership at the Highfield Adolescent Unit. Throughout the school, there is a genuine commitment to including all pupils and, to assist in this, the school develops excellent links with pupils' home schools. It gathers and takes account of pupils' and parents' views and works very closely with the medical team in making decisions about how best to meet the needs of individual pupils. The high quality accommodation, especially at the Oxford Children's Hospital site, provides pupils with a very positive learning environment.

The loss of five teachers and the movement of staff and pupils from six sites to four have necessarily altered the range of needs and staff skills at each site. Opportunities for staff to undertake training are good overall, although managers are aware of some gaps in teachers' knowledge, for instance in relation to supporting pupils with learning difficulties. The ongoing changes, with a further planned reduction in the number of sites, make identifying priorities and staff training particularly crucial. Senior managers gather a lot of information about the school's effectiveness and make the right overall decisions, so that improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school is well placed to improve further. However, the priorities in the school development plan lack precision, focusing on broad areas for improvement rather than identifying precise objectives and linking these, where appropriate, to staff training needs.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's work. They collect information for themselves through regular visits and ask perceptive questions about its effectiveness.

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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
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me welcome on my recent visit to the school. I very much enjoyed seeing the work that you do in the classrooms or at your bedside and now I am writing to tell you what I found out about the school.

This is a good school with some outstanding features. I could see how important it is to you as you face painful medical treatment or battle to deal with your feelings. Your parents say that they really appreciate the school's work and it was lovely to see how you get absorbed in the activities. You are all cared for and supported exceptionally well by the staff at the school. They are very sensitive to your needs and feelings, and they work really closely with the medical staff so that your education fits around your treatment.

For those of you who are staying for quite a long time in hospital, the school helps you to keep up with work provided by your home school. For those of you who are only in for a few days, it provides you with interesting things to take your mind off your illness and sometimes to fill gaps in your knowledge. As a result, you make good progress and some of the work you produce, especially the poems and writing by pupils at the Highfield Adolescent Unit, is of very high quality. The opportunities you have to work with visitors, such as artists, writers and musicians, is especially important in the progress that you make and, for some of you, visits into Oxford help to make learning even more exciting.

The school is led and managed well and the managers are keen to make the school even better. I have asked them to do this by thinking a bit more about exactly what they need to do to improve the school and by planning activities and materials that match the wide range of needs of all the different pupils who attend school at the different sites.

Yours sincerely

M J Goodchild

Lead Inspector