

Mary Hare Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110180
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	310213
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Christopher Garrett

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	245
Sixth form	73
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	1
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Hogarth
Principal	Mr Tony Shaw

Age group	4–19
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Inspection number	310213

Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Arlington Manor Snelsmore Common Newbury RG14 3BQ
Telephone number	01635 244 200
Fax number	01635 248 019

Age group	4-19
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Introduction

This was a single integrated inspection of education and social care (welfare). Social care was inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000. The section 5 school inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors on 10 and 11 December 2008 and the social care inspection was carried out by three Social Care Inspectors between 8 and 10 December 2008.

Description of the school

Mary Hare School caters for pupils with severe and profound hearing loss. The primary centre is on a separate site from the much larger secondary department. Pupils are admitted from all parts of the United Kingdom. All have a statement of special educational need and nearly all take advantage of the school's boarding provision. The great majority of pupils are of White British origin and very few speak English as an additional language. The very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in the youngest Key Stage 1 class. The school has specialist status and is a training school giving support to teachers of the deaf at both a local and national level. It has gained the Healthy Schools, Investors in People, Eco Schools Bronze and the Berkshire Food Safety Silver awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mary Hare is a good school. Pupils' academic achievements are excellent and standards are high as a direct result of outstanding teaching and learning. Their personal development is good, as are the care, guidance and support that they receive. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and develop the self-esteem and confidence they need to aim high. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. As one parent commented, 'Since starting at this school my child has come on in leaps and bounds.'

The senior leadership team are passionate in their belief that deaf pupils can achieve as well as their hearing peers. They have established a supportive ethos that contributes significantly to pupils' outstanding academic achievements. There are excellent systems to monitor and develop teaching and learning. These are used extremely well to ensure that all staff receive regular feedback about and training in how to work with pupils with severe and profound hearing loss. This has ensured significant improvement in teaching since the last integrated inspection in 2005. However, the systems to monitor the boarding provision do not ensure this same cycle of excellent improvement. Several National Minimum Standards (NMS) are not met and there is still further to go to ensure that boarding gives the same high quality of support to pupils' personal development and welfare as is given by other aspects of the provision. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan their lessons very conscientiously with a clear focus on the needs of individuals, based on the challenging targets that are set. Teachers and teaching assistants make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve in all the subjects they study. The professionalism and commitment of these support staff play a significant part in promoting all pupils' outstanding academic achievements. The curriculum is excellent and very well matched to pupils' needs. There are particularly wide-ranging enrichment activities, such as the visits abroad, which pupils really enjoy. These make a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development. The school uses information and communication technology (ICT) extremely well to enhance learning.

The principal and senior team have established a clear sense of purpose. Excellent relationships have been built up with external agencies. As part of the school's specialist status, it supports a wide range of different institutions in teaching deaf children and this is highly valued by all. These links have also been used extremely effectively to enhance the professional development of the school's teaching and support staff, and extend the range of their experience. The school's work in championing the profile of deaf pupils across the world makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. Middle leaders support their subjects very well and are actively developing their leadership skills through national programmes. The governing body is good and supports the school well. It acts very effectively as its critical friend to check that pupils meet the school's challenging academic targets. However, its systems to monitor and evaluate the boarding provision are not as effective in ensuring the same very high quality of provision evident in other aspects of the school's work. The school's track record shows that, overall, it is well placed to improve in future.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are excellent and, as a result, students make extremely good progress and achieve high academic standards. Nearly all go on to higher education, mostly university, and achieve further success. Students are enthusiastic about their courses and appreciate the

high level of individual tuition that they receive. They work in a fully inclusive environment covering a very wide range of ability and all students make good gains in their self-esteem and in their levels of maturity. There is still further to go, however, in ensuring that the work of the boarding provision contributes fully to their personal development and welfare. The curriculum has been extended since the time of the last inspection and now includes a range of vocational opportunities that are extremely well matched to students' needs. Highly effective guidance is given to students and ensures that they make well-considered career choices. The leadership is good with particularly good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There is insufficient evidence to report on all aspects of this area because the school has only just started to cater for pupils of this age. The arrangements to introduce young children to their new environment and ensure their welfare are highly effective. These are based on a comprehensive assessment of each child's needs which takes full account of parents' views. As a result, children settle into class very quickly and soon start to develop the daily routines and independence that are the cornerstones for their future learning. The leadership of the EYFS is very effective and ensures that all staff are well supported to meet the children's needs. There are some minor shortcomings in the outside provision for EYFS children and the school is currently addressing these.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 3

The quality of the boarding provision is satisfactory. Aspects are good and occasionally outstanding. In the short period since the last inspection, the school has addressed the majority of the previous recommendations. Action taken for some has yet to be fully tested and become embedded in practice. No action has been taken to address the shortfall in monitoring and evaluation of records, which has allowed some inconsistencies in practice to develop.

Elements of the school's practice in meeting the dietary and health needs of boarders are strong. Pupils have access to a wide range of healthcare provision. The new medication policy has yet to be fully implemented and compliance with this varies between houses and school sites. Staff have not received training in the administration and dispensing of medication. A varied, healthy and nutritious diet is provided. Boarders express general satisfaction with meals during the day. A system is being trialled to monitor the food intake of some individuals.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring that the boarders are kept safe and protected from harm. Staff demonstrate an informed awareness of their responsibilities in safeguarding young people. While some procedures are rarely used, staff are aware of the guidance in place, and are confident about using the procedures if required. Training and practice reflect attention to the specific needs of the deaf community. The designated person is known to all staff and has received appropriate training. New procedures have been implemented and tested in response to an incident when a student went missing from the school. Boarders report low levels of bullying and state, when it does occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff. Children and young people are aware of the standards of behaviour expected and the consequences attached to unacceptable behaviour. Boarders are positive and enthusiastic about the recently introduced behaviour rewards system in some of the houses and state that it has made them reflect on their behaviour. Inconsistencies in the recording of sanctions, and the absence of a robust monitoring process, mean that these are not effectively assessed or

evaluated. The school takes steps on a day-to-day basis to ensure that boarders, staff and visitors are safe from the risk of fire and other hazards. Appropriate risk assessments are in place. The school's vetting and recruitment procedures contribute to the overall safeguarding of boarders.

The boarding provision actively supports the children's educational progress at the school. Care staff contribute to annual reviews and assist in the routine 'prep' periods. Boarders receive individual support, if needed, from a range of internal and external services and agencies. They speak positively of the benefits of being part of the school community. There are a number of established forums that give the boarders the opportunity to be consulted and involved in key decisions and the day-to-day running of the school. Pupils indicate examples of the changes that these have brought about. Pre-admission procedures suitably inform parents how their children will be cared for. The formal care planning process is under-developed and does not fully specify how all the identified needs of boarders are to be met. Children and young people are generally satisfied with the arrangements for them to maintain contact with their families.

The school has made a commitment to address the variation in the standards of accommodation between the boarding houses. The newly piloted refurbished bedrooms, bathroom and common rooms have been met with great approval from both staff and boarders. A new system for auditing the accommodation prioritises areas for redecoration, redevelopment and refurbishment.

The school demonstrates a commitment to striving to ensure that the children and young people are cared for by a competent staff team who have shared knowledge and experience of working with the deaf community. The school ensures that the care staff have access to appropriate training. The promotion of equality and diversity within the school is good. There are shortfalls relating to the current management and organisation of the boarding provision. The recently implemented staffing policy does not adequately address issues arising from the limited number of staff who are available to take boarders out on informal recreational trips or activities, or on the informal arrangements for providing inter-house support during emergencies. There are informal arrangements for some care staff to receive supervision. The school failed to determine the levels of competency or experience required for the post of the head of care before making this key appointment. Records and practices are not being effectively monitored or evaluated.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of the boarding provision so that it matches the very high quality of other aspects of the school's work, particularly in its contribution to pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Ensure that it meets the NMS currently not met as listed below.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- Assess the competency of staff in the recording and administration of medication (NMS.14).
- Review the system for labelling, recording and monitoring the amount of medication held by the school and stored in the boarding houses (NMS.14).
- Fully implement the system for monitoring what young people are eating (NMS.15).
- Ensure consistency in the recording of sanctions (NMS.22).
- Implement a system for reviewing the effectiveness of sanctions (NMS.22).
- Continue with the programme of redecoration and refurbishment to residential accommodation (NMS.23).

- Ensure that there are sufficient numbers of staff to meet the daily needs of the boarders (NMS.28).
- Establish a system of staff supervision for all care staff (NMS.30).
- Ensure that the head of care or equivalent post-holder has qualifications that demonstrate competencies at the level of NVQ 4 (NMS.31).
- Ensure that the head of care or equivalent post-holder has experience in working with children and young people (NMS.31).
- Implement a system for monitoring and evaluating care records (NMS.32).

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve extremely well given their starting points. Across the school, they reach and often exceed their challenging targets. The very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language receive a high level of support so that their academic achievements match those of their peers. The provision in the primary centre is tailored very carefully to meet pupils' needs, particularly their individual language needs and, as result, pupils achieve extremely well across all areas. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 make exceptionally good progress. The value-added scores for this age group are outstanding. The results they gain at age 16 are consistently above those expected nationally for pupils of this age. For example, for the past five years, just over 80% of pupils have gained five or more GCSE A* to C grades. Throughout the school, the strong belief that deaf pupils 'can do' as well as their hearing peers is the key driver that ensures this level of success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils of all ages thoroughly enjoy school, as seen in Christmas productions such as Cinderella. Attendance is excellent and pupils show a keen interest in learning. These features make an important contribution to their excellent academic achievements. Behaviour is good. The recently introduced behaviour rewards system, in some of the secondary boarding houses, is improving the ways in which pupils think through the effect of their actions on others outside the normal school day. Most pupils adopt a healthy lifestyle and enjoy physical activity. However, a number of boarders indicated that there are insufficient evening activities to fully support this aspect of their personal development. Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically and, particularly through the secondary School Council, are very involved in decision-making. Many of the older pupils make a difference to their school community by acting as mentors and advocates for younger pupils. Pupils contribute extremely well to the wider community, for example by acting as champions of the deaf. They pay attention to acting safely and get on very well together in a racially harmonious atmosphere. A minority of pupils, however, express reservations about the 'fairness' of the sanctions in the boarding provision and this does not fully support their growing understanding of social justice. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. There are excellent opportunities for older pupils to develop the key academic and work-based skills that prepare them extremely well for life once they leave school. One pupil said, 'I know that coping with a big and dangerous world will be difficult, but now I feel much more confident about my future.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Through a very focused programme of training, teachers and teaching assistants in both primary and secondary provision gain the skills and confidence they need to address pupils' needs. Speech therapists and audiologists work very closely with them to ensure that all pupils gain the communication and interaction skills that are critical to their development. This is reflected in the consistently thorough planning that has a clear focus on how pupils' individual needs will be met. Regular and rigorous assessment by staff, linked to very effective self and peer assessment with older pupils, ensures that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. The very effective relationships between staff and pupils in lessons are the bedrock for the highly successful learning that results. Teachers are particularly well supported by the teaching assistants in lessons and this ensures that pupils quickly develop the confidence they need to succeed. This teamwork is much appreciated by pupils and is the reason why, in the words of one of the older pupils, 'Everyone helps us a lot.' Support from subject staff ensures that school 'prep' is very well linked to lessons and is highly effective in supporting pupils' academic achievements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The provision for primary pupils fully reflects national guidelines, and activities are extremely well tailored to the needs of deaf pupils. The curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 16 and in the sixth form has been improved and adapted since the last inspection and provides excellent opportunities for all pupils to develop the academic and work-based skills they will need in the future. A wide range of accreditation is available and this is supplemented very effectively by opportunities through work experience and placements. Across the school there is an exceptionally wide range of enrichment that includes visits abroad, work with local artists and activities undertaken as part of the school's excellent links with the wider community. The range of experiences provided is exemplified well by the success of 'The Deafness' pop group at the national Schools Proms.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

From day one in the primary centre, there is comprehensive tracking of each pupil's academic progress. This is used extremely well to pinpoint individuals who need extra support or who need to be extended in their learning. Throughout the school, academic targets are set for every pupil to help them achieve their best and this system is used extremely well to raise academic achievements and standards. The day-time primary and secondary provision has highly effective systems to guide and support personal development. As a result, pupils gain good levels of maturity. Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements. In the boarding provision, however, there are inconsistencies linked to the NMS and shortfalls in the monitoring of records. Consequently, this provision does not fully promote pupils' personal development and welfare. Parents and carers are seen as partners in their child's education and the school works extremely well with them and with a very wide range of outside agencies to support pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The principal and senior team provide a very strong lead in ensuring very high academic achievements and an excellent cycle of improvement in this aspect of the school's work. The monitoring systems are not, however, ensuring the same excellent cycle of improvement in the boarding provision. Leadership of the primary centre is much improved since the last inspection so that the headteacher plays a full and strategic role in the life of the whole school. Middle leaders in both the primary and secondary provision are well informed and they have put carefully thought-out action plans in place to improve practice in their subjects. Governors ask searching questions and have incisive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses in relation to its academic performance. They ensure that finances are managed efficiently and that all statutory requirements are met. However, their checking of the quality and procedures relating to the boarding provision, for example in relation to the recent appointment to the head of care, is not ensuring the same very high quality of provision as in the rest of the school.

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Annex A

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?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	IE ²	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	IE ²	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	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?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
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	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

05 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mary Hare Grammar School, Newbury, RG14 3BQ

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we came to visit your school. We particularly enjoyed the discussions we had with you and we appreciated the time you spent completing the questionnaires. You told us that Mary Hare is a good school and we agree with you. You said that pupils are well behaved and you make good friends. We were glad to hear how much you enjoy school and you are clearly very proud of your academic achievements. We were impressed with the ways in which you champion the needs of deaf children. We agree that you get a lot of support from staff so that you gain confidence and achieve high standards. The curriculum is excellent and there are plenty of opportunities for you to do extra things like getting involved with 'A Night at the Theatre' production or even to become a member of a pop group.

In order for the school to improve even further we have asked the staff to make sure that the boarding provision improves so that it is of the same very high quality as other aspects of the school.

Yours faithfully,

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector