

# Royal Free Hospital Children's School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100094
<b>Local Authority</b>	Camden
<b>Inspection number</b>	323223
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Charlesworth

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	6
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Sally Gimson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Jude Chalk
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 September 2005
<b>School address</b>	Floor 6 - 6 West B Ward Pond Street London NW3 2QG
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7472 6298
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7830 2302

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Royal Free Hospital Children's School (RFHCS) is located within the Royal Free Hospital. The school provides education for up to 40 pupils and the roll changes on a daily basis. The school does not cater for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). These children receive play therapy from hospital staff. The school staff supports the therapists' work, for example by liaising with children's home-school (the school they usually attend). The great majority of pupils fall into two groups. The first is those who are hospital in-patients with medical needs, who are usually very short stay, although some have recurring admissions. About four fifths of these pupils are in hospital for just one or two days and may attend school for only part of this time due to medical treatment. The second group comprises long-term day-pupils of secondary school age who have medical and/or mental health needs which prevent them from attending their own schools. The RFHCS also provides an outreach service to local schools. The hospital serves a much wider area than Camden, and also admits children from overseas for specific medical treatments. Pupils come from a very wide range of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. The RFHCS gained the Healthy Schools award in July 2007. The head teacher has been in post for eighteen months.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The RFHCS is a good school. It is well led and managed. The school has developed considerably over the past eighteen months since the new headteacher introduced a number of very effective systems and practices to improve it. This has successfully addressed the last inspection's issue for improvement. The RFHCS provides good quality education and outstanding care and support. As a result, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The school does much to ensure that pupils understand how to make safe and healthy choices, develop the skills to re-engage with and contribute to the community, and become prepared for personal and economic well-being. Questionnaires used by the school and the inspection show parents' overwhelming satisfaction with the RFHCS. One parent wrote, 'This school has totally changed my daughter's outlook on school. She has learned more here in one year than she did in three years in her previous school.'

The RFHCS's strong focus on supporting pupils' emotional, mental health and personal development and well-being is highly effective. Short-term in-patients settle quickly and happily, and work well for as long as they attend the school. On entry to the RFHCS, the long-term day-pupils have physical and/or mental health issues which prevent them from attending their home-school. Some have been out of education for a long time and are very anxious about returning. Their personal development is limited, and their self-confidence, willingness and ability to learn are low. As a result, almost all have academic standards that are considerably below expectations for their age. However, the care and support offered by the RFHCS supports their recovering health and helps their personal development to improve rapidly. The pupils' self-esteem and confidence grow and they become able to engage in school, enjoy it and learn. Individuals' attendance generally improves vastly from, for example, a position of long-term school-refusal to one of regular attendance. Although teaching is good overall, the school's outstanding support helps pupils' attainment to rise sharply. Almost all of the relevant age gain several GCSEs with standards within the broad range expected. Most successfully move on to sixth form or college placements for further education. This is an outstanding achievement for these pupils, considering their starting points and difficulties.

The curriculum is good and focuses on core subjects for all pupils. The curriculum for longer-term pupils is systematically planned. It is carefully tailored to meet individual needs, and includes suitable accreditation and work-related learning as appropriate. When pupils remain on the roll of their home-school, their studies are informed by the schemes of work currently followed by the schools. These often include subjects other than the core, although the limited accommodation restricts practical activities. The staff's expertise and flexibility enable them to teach all subjects and teaching is good overall. Occasionally, though, the learning objectives of lessons are obscured by the staff's efforts to make sure all pupils are included and supported. Nevertheless, the highly personalised approach taken to teaching and learning helps the day-pupils make up for lost time and prepares them very well for examinations. The curriculum for short stay in-patients enables them to maintain their skills through interesting and enjoyable activities. However, these tend to be 'one-off' activities. They are not always taken from a suitable curriculum plan which would, for example, be helpful for longer-term in-patients and those with recurring admissions. The school is seeking to widen its remit and make provision for children in the EYFS, alongside that provided by the hospital therapists. However, it has not yet properly considered the new statutory requirements and arrangements needed for this age group.

Strong leadership underpins the school's effectiveness. The headteacher is innovative and members of the governing body offer invaluable support and guidance to the school. The headteacher and governing body have a clear, realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the immediate and strategic developments required. Staff are becoming increasingly involved in management, for example playing a key part in school self-evaluation and determining the priorities for improvement. Performance management is robust and professional development is an important element of the school's increasing effectiveness. The school has excellent partnerships with a range of external and hospital-based professionals, which benefit the pupils and the school as a whole. Improvement is following a clearly planned path; the school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Review the statutory requirements for children in the EYFS to inform the school's plans to widen its remit.
- Ensure that all teaching activities derive from suitable long-term curriculum plans.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 1**

Many pupils with mental health difficulties have standards that are low on entry to the RFHCS, because they have been affected by their patchy school attendance or lack of engagement in learning. However, the achievement of the majority of pupils is outstanding. This is due to the exceptional support given, and the personalised approach taken to meeting each individual's needs. The long-term day pupils rapidly make up for lost time. The standards they attain are broadly average, although individual pupils' range from well below average to high standards for their age. Almost all manage to take public examinations, and gain a number of GCSEs, often gaining grades within the upper range. The short-term in-patients mostly attend the RFHCS for under two days. They enjoy their time in school and generally engage happily with activities. If they attend the school for long enough, these pupils also make rapid progress. One parent, whose young child was in hospital for five weeks, said that his reading came on 'in leaps and bounds,' and that he did not fall behind academically because of this 'fantastic' school.

### **Personal development and well-being**

#### **Grade: 1**

Despite the daily changes in the pupil population, the RFHCS's supportive ethos helps pupils to settle quickly, feel safe and enjoy school, however short their stay. Questionnaires and letters of thanks show the full extent of pupils' and parents satisfaction with the school. One pupil summed up its work by saying, 'Everyone here understands how we feel'. The RFHCS works as a small, safe community where everyone is equally valued and supported. Pupils' personal development is strongly supported by 'community meetings' in which they consider a range of spiritual, social and ethical issues. This contributes very effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand the choices they should make in order to stay safe and healthy. Behaviour is outstanding and there have been no exclusions or incidents of bullying. Pupils concentrate well, despite the cramped classroom conditions and their health needs. They interact very well with staff and each other. Pupils show a remarkable amount of understanding and acceptance of one another's difficulties which helps to promote community cohesion both within and outside the school. The improvement in the day-pupils' personal

development strongly underpins their willingness and ability to learn, and is a very significant factor in their outstanding academic achievement.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching takes place at pupils' bedside and in the classroom. The great strength of all teaching is the staff's consideration for pupils' personal and emotional needs, and the detailed planning for the longer-term pupils' educational progress. This is what enables all pupils to engage in school and enjoy learning, and underpins the outstanding achievement of longer-term pupils. Pupils are well behaved and attentive, and relationships are outstanding. The staff encourage pupils to work independently, and to assess their own work so that they can improve it. They seek pupils' active involvement at all times, through practical activities, discussion and questioning. This ensures that all pupils are included, but does not always sufficiently draw out or add to their knowledge and understanding. At times, learning objectives can be buried under a teacher's pastoral efforts, and opportunities are lost for increasing their knowledge and understanding. Teachers are exceptionally flexible and draw upon their considerable experience and a wealth of resources to include and engage new pupils from the start. Partnerships with parents, pupils' home-schools and other professionals are outstanding, and make a great contribution to the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets requirements but is somewhat restricted by the inadequate accommodation. There is currently one classroom in which pupils of both primary and secondary ages are taught at the same time. The hospital allows the occasional use of a small second room for examinations and individual tuition. There are no facilities for practical activities or physical education. There is currently no accommodation that could be allocated to children of EYFS age, which limits the school's potential for working with this age group. The curriculum for day-pupils focuses on the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and art and design. Personal, social and health education is also very well addressed in a number of ways, including lessons and work on the 'social and emotional aspects of learning' (SEAL) programme. This strongly supports pupils' personal development and educational achievement. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support other subjects. Pupils enjoy using ICT, for example for presentations. The curriculum for short-term pupils of primary age also focuses on the core subjects. These are supplemented by activities such as creative arts. Pupils enjoy these very much. However, the activities are always not set in a planned sequence which assures breadth and variety over time. Enrichment for the day-pupils is outstanding, taking their needs and difficulties into account. Much use is made of the community and London's extensive cultural and sporting facilities. This prepares pupils very well for their future personal and economic well-being, and for re-joining and contributing to the community.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Parents express great confidence in the school and the continual educational and personal support, care and guidance it offers their children. Staff are highly supportive to parents. They

keep them closely involved and very well informed about their children's progress. Day-pupils have a personal mentor with whom they have a close relationship, and to whom they can turn for extra support. Each has a personal learning plan which sets out their own provision, and targets and goals in academic subjects and areas related to personal development. Pupils make their own contribution to these and they are reviewed frequently. The targets set out the personal and learning steps each pupil needs to take in order, ultimately, to return to education in the community. All safeguarding, child protection and health and safety routines and procedures are robust and well understood and implemented. The school has outstanding partnerships with a number of hospital and external agencies, such as the child and adolescent mental health team. These help secure the support each pupil needs in order to recover, achieve well and move on.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The RFHCS is long-established and highly regarded. Nevertheless, there has been considerable recent improvement. Systems, policies and practices have been reviewed, updated and developed, and the school's performance is monitored closely. The RFHCS regularly seeks the views of pupils, parents, staff and other stakeholders, and acts appropriately on the findings. An outstanding system for school self-evaluation involving all staff has been introduced. This has resulted in clearly identified areas for further improvement, challenging targets to achieve and detailed plans to achieve them. In addition, in order to extend its provision to include children in the EYFS, the school has rightly identified the urgent need to increase the accommodation allocated for its use, and work towards meeting the new requirements for the age group. Staff work together effectively. They are increasingly involved in the management of the school and now take the initiative in day-to-day matters, as to be expected of a long-established and experienced team. This has also improved the school's cost effectiveness. Governance is good. Governors are appropriately involved in shaping the strategic direction of the school, and assuring the quality of provision. Partnerships with parents, professionals and other schools are outstanding, and strongly support the school's role in promoting community cohesion.

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

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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
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**

01 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Royal Free Hospital Children's School, London, NW3 2QG

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed talking to you and sitting in on your lessons. I particularly liked watching some of you make puppets from dusters. What a clever idea, and you decorated them beautifully too! I came to the school to see how it is working and how well you are doing, and I was very pleased with what I found. I agree with the school staff and your parents. The Royal Free Hospital Children's School is a good school.

I think that the school makes an enormous difference to the lives and achievements of those of you that attend on a daily basis or are in hospital for a relatively long time. You make excellent progress because of the outstanding care, support and guidance that you are given. This helps you to enjoy school and learn. You make up for lost time very effectively. Seeing you work together in a group, and how caring and considerate you are towards one another shows how good your personal development is now. Those of you who are day pupils attend much more regularly than you did previously at other schools. Well done! The school is well led and managed. You might not realise it, but school's leaders are working hard to improve it at the moment and have introduced a number of new systems to help you further. The staff work hard to look after you and help you make the right life-style choices and succeed in your studies. Pupils do well in their GCSEs, which is a credit to their hard work and the good quality of education provided.

Those of you who attend very briefly because you are only in hospital for a short time also enjoy the activities you are given. They keep you involved and interested in learning which is very important so that you don't fall behind.

I have asked the headteacher, governors and staff to improve two aspects of the school. These are:

- to sort out what responsibility it might have for children who attend reception classes in their own schools
- to make sure that all the activities they prepare for you are planned to help you to learn and build up your skills systematically.

I wish you well, and all the best for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth

Lead Inspector