

Whittington Hospital Class

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134274
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	328875
Inspection date	4 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Stuart Charlton

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	16
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Rosemarie Hilditch
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2006
School address	Ifor Ward Highgate Hill Archway London N19 5NF
Telephone number	020 7272 3070
Fax number	020 7288 5550

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the systems to monitor and evaluate provision, the effectiveness of leadership and management, and how well pupils' academic and personal development is promoted. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Whittington Hospital Class is a pupil referral unit for those aged 5 to 16. It caters for pupils who are unable to attend school because of their medical needs. Provision is either in hospital or through the home tuition service. About half are educated in hospital on a short-term basis and, consequently, there is a very high turnover of these pupils. Some pupils have frequent readmissions into hospital, and so build up a long-term relationship with the Hospital Class. In September 2008, an extra classroom facility, the Lodge, was brought into use to cater for pupils on home tuition who are able to attend and benefit from such provision. About a third of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is higher than is usual. Nearly half the pupils come from ethnic minority families. Whittington Hospital Class is in the process of being brought into the local authority's overarching provision for its pupil referral units, New River College. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Whittington Hospital Class provides outstanding education for its pupils. This stems from its outstanding teaching and learning, but, more importantly, comes about through the excellent support and guidance from staff, resulting in pupils' personal development being exemplary. The expertise of staff, and the ways in which they work to respect the dignity of pupils with extreme medical needs, is second to none. The Hospital Class is held in very high esteem by pupils and their parents. As one parent commented, 'My daughter has been so happy and does not want to leave.'

All pupils who join Whittington Hospital Class have suffered considerable disruption to their education. All have medical needs, although some are more extreme than others. The vast majority are either taught in the Hospital Class on the wards, or, if appropriate, at home. The recently opened Lodge provides an effective classroom base outside the hospital for a few pupils whose medical needs are less extreme. Whittington Hospital Class does not enter pupils directly for external examinations, but it analyses their attainment when they take examinations in their mainstream schools very carefully. These analyses show that every year since the last inspection, pupils have attained standards that are in line with those expected nationally. For example, many students have gained good GCSE grades in a range of subjects. This represents at least good achievement given pupils' low starting points. For many, achievement is outstanding, particularly those with the most extreme medical needs who often gain top grades at GCSE. The inspection shows that current pupils are making excellent progress due, in part, to the one-to-one tuition they receive.

There are very effective systems to determine pupils' attainment on entry. This involves using information from their previous schools and a wide range of diagnostic tests. Clear education plans are set up for each pupil with challenging targets based on National Curriculum or P levels. These are reviewed on a regular basis. Across the provision, there are excellent systems to monitor teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. This information is used extremely well in helping and supporting teachers to develop their practice. Teachers plan their lessons conscientiously, and focus very clearly on the challenging targets that are set for pupils' personal and academic development. They match their teaching methods and resources very carefully to the immediate needs of the pupils and respond extremely well to the way in which these can change very quickly as a result of the medical treatments that they undergo. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils result in very effective learning.

All staff have real insight into how to work with pupils with medical conditions in order to overcome their anxieties and develop their self-esteem and confidence. Consequently, they provide excellent care for all pupils. This is a key strength and pervades all the work of Whittington Hospital Class, ensuring that pupils' personal development is outstanding. Attendance overall is good, which represents a radical improvement over their attendance at their previous schools. There are excellent systems in place to monitor pupils' behaviour and to enable them to address the challenges imposed by their medical conditions. Consequently, behaviour is exemplary and all pupils make appreciable changes for the better in their attitudes to learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is excellent. Most pupils greatly enjoy their education and are proud of the facilities and what the Hospital Class enables them to achieve. They have very good awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle owing to both the hospital's emphasis on healthy meals and their own medical conditions. In addition, a wide range of opportunities for physical activity is available. As a result, the school was awarded

Healthy School status. All pupils understand the importance of safety, and are highly appreciative of the secure environment which is provided. The way in which Whittington Hospital Class promotes the value of education across the hospital community is exemplary. Staff in the Hospital Class work in a wider regional and national context to champion the role of education in the treatment of young people with extreme medical needs. As a result, some pupils from overseas have joined the Hospital Class during their treatment. These pupils are warmly welcomed and exemplify the excellent way in which community cohesion is promoted. Older pupils mentor and support their younger peers extremely well. The strong focus on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, along with the excellent development of their personal skills, prepares them extremely well for their future. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of pupils, enabling them to successfully complete work for external examinations started in their previous schools. The small group sizes and the one-to-one tuition are a strength of the provision. However, at present, some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to experience the challenges of working in large class situations, to prepare them for reintegration into mainstream schools. Staff are aware of this and are actively investigating and developing links with local primary, special and secondary schools and with New River College itself.

The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the provision should develop. She provides the energy, commitment and determination to put this into practice. She is very ably supported by the staff. Between them, they have established an ethos in which all pupils are given opportunities to enable them to obtain nationally recognised qualifications irrespective of their medical needs. This pervades all the work in the Hospital Class and contributes substantially to raising pupils' self-esteem. A cornerstone of the Hospital Class is the teamwork which has been established and the way in which a real sense of purpose and confidence has been built up for both staff and pupils. There are very good systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision and all staff have a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, they have drawn up a comprehensive development plan, which gives precise guidance on how the provision will improve further. The members of the Whittington Hospital Class management group are very supportive of the provision and give unstintingly of their time in promoting its achievements both within the hospital and in the wider community. Although they do not have direct budgetary control, they are highly effective in promoting the needs of the Hospital Class and acting as its critical friend. The development of the Lodge in such a short period of time is a tribute to their success.

A notable feature in the success of Whittington Hospital Class is the excellent relationships that have been developed with other agencies, both within the hospital and outside. These contribute very effectively to promoting pupils' well being. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their safety are very robust. There has been substantial improvement since the last inspection and the leadership has clearly demonstrated that it has excellent capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for all pupils to experience the challenges of working in large class situations, to prepare them for reintegration into mainstream schools.

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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?	1
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 ¹ 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

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.

Personal development and well-being

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

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

23 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whittington Hospital Class, London, N19 5NF

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited your Hospital Class and the Lodge on 3 February 2009. I particularly enjoyed being able to talk to a good number of you. You told me very clearly that the Hospital Class and the Lodge are outstanding. In particular, you emphasised that staff are always ready to help you and that they make learning fun. You all said that the work you do enables you to deal much more effectively with your medical problems. I agree with all your very positive comments and consider that you get the first-rate care and attention needed to ensure that you all achieve as well as you can.

All the staff work very hard to ensure that you are able to complete your education despite the disruptions caused by your treatments. The links that are being set up with the New River College make the future very exciting for you. I agree that the small group sizes are a strength. I have asked staff to ensure that you also get opportunities to learn how to work in large class groups in mainstream schools or at college. I know that you will all try your very best at all times to help the staff to make Whittington Hospital Class even better.

Yours faithfully

Stuart Charlton

Lead Inspector