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Mr D Matthews
Oxfordshire Hospital School
Level 2 - Oxford Children's Hospital
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Headley Way
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Dear Mr Matthews

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 01 October 2008 to look at work in promoting equality.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: lesson observations, meetings with pupils, parents, staff including medical staff, governors and reviewing relevant documentation.

The quality of provision to promote equalities for pupils is outstanding.

Features of good practice observed

- All the following help pupils receiving medical treatment to continue making academic progress at a time when health needs are a priority. Those on short term placements have minimal disruption to their education and so their achievement quickly returns to a level in line with that prior to admission. Pupils receiving long term or returning treatment make good progress and for some it is outstanding. Many gain relatively good levels of qualifications or results in national tests.
- Education staff make a highly effective contribution to multi-disciplinary work. The way in which staff from different professions work together is based on high levels of trust, clear professional boundaries and shared accountability for the outcomes of pupils with medical needs attending one of the hospitals. This helps pupils maintain academic progress while receiving medical treatment.

- Teachers understand some of the medical reasons for different levels of attention and progress but do not make these an excuse; they maintain high expectations of pupils when they are attending the hospital school. For example, there is a strong structure for learning in place for pupils with severe psychiatric needs and it is within this framework that flexibility can be managed while maintaining high expectations.
- The curriculum is planned in a flexible, creative way so that it can be matched to pupils' needs, regardless of their age or length of stay in hospital. Teachers are skilled at using pupils' interests to begin engagement with learning. They are diligent in developing work, if received, from the pupils' home schools minimising disruption to previous achievement.
- The school's efforts to increase the specialist skills available across the team are beginning to enhance its versatility.
- Case studies are a very good way of demonstrating outcomes for individual pupils. It is evident that the school measures progress in a range of ways and takes a holistic view of its pupils, considering their needs as an individual and in the context of family, friendship group and wider community. For example, pupils gain an extremely good understanding of how to manage ongoing medical conditions so that they can enjoy a full life and remain as safe as possible. Others have been given support in helping their friends understand the implications of their health needs.
- There are very good relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are very appreciative of the education they receive and welcome the way in which their learning is broken down into accessible steps. They enjoy their work at the hospital school many commenting that it prevented them dwelling on the medical situation. Work based around art is especially popular with pupils and makes a significant contribution to cultural development.
- Staff also undertake an important role with carers. They offer understanding of the medical and emotional situation alongside practical support, for example effective liaison with pupils' home schools.
- Planning of re-integration programmes into schools is highly effective and receiving schools are extremely positive about the way in which the staff at the hospital school act as strong advocates for the pupil but at the same time help to address the concerns and limitations of a school situation.

Areas for development

- Use case studies more systematically to draw common threads to aid effective evaluation and future development.
- Ensure that communication and follow up after pupils leave helps to maintain the well targeted support and high expectations for academic achievement and social skills which the pupils have enjoyed at the hospital school in all subsequent provision.

- Reconsider how groups of pupils currently not admitted to the hospital school who miss a sizeable amount of education (perhaps due to regular single days for medical treatment over a year) can be supported by the school to ensure their equality of opportunity to succeed.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in Oxford Hospital School.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson
Her Majesty's Inspector