

Hospital Education Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134859
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	341545
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Christine Emerson

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Denise Benson
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2006
School address	The School Rooms Bramble Unit Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital Barrack Road Exeter EX2 5DW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited both hospitals where the provision is sited in order to obtain a full overview of the centre's work. She observed five lessons, of which, three were delivered at pupils' bedsides and two in the classrooms. Two of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector had discussions with teachers and hospital staff, the school improvement partner and the chair of the management committee. She spoke to pupils and to a parent. The inspector examined the files of four pupils in detail, as well as the centre's weekly record sheets, to see how well the centre meets pupils' individual needs and checks their progress. A wide range of documentation was also examined, including the centre's development plan and policy documents for safeguarding and other statutory requirements. In addition, the inspector looked at the nine parental questionnaires which were returned.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- whether the quality of provision for pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved, and how well these pupils are doing
- whether there is an effective system to monitor teaching, and the impact of this on teaching and pupils' learning
- whether there are effective communication, links and monitoring to ensure that pupils at the two hospital sites achieve equally well.

Information about the school

The Hospital Education Centre provides education for pupils who are admitted to either The Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital or The North Devon District Hospital. As there is a distance of 57 miles between the two hospitals, the centre has teaching bases in each hospital. Pupils are either taught in these or at their bedsides. The centre provides for pupils with a very wide range of different abilities, including some with statements of special educational needs. The centre does not cater for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage or the sixth form. Many pupils stay at the hospital for only a few days, although there are other pupils who are regularly readmitted or are in hospital for longer periods. The number of pupils varies considerably each day. Last year 453 pupils accessed the provision. Of these, a few pupils were looked after by the local authority or were of minority ethnic heritage. The centre holds the Healthy Schools award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The centre provides a good education for the pupils because staff are very skilled at quickly adapting teaching methods and resources to meet the widely diverse needs and attainment levels of newly admitted pupils. Strong links with pupils' home schools ensure that, wherever possible, pupils can continue with their school work so that they do not fall behind. The provision for pupils with complex special educational needs, including sensory difficulties, has improved a great deal since the previous inspection and is now good. As a result, the pupils learn better and make more rapid progress. The centre's records demonstrate that all groups of pupils now make good progress and achieve well. However, the tracking of the progress of pupils with more complex special educational needs and/or disabilities is not always sufficiently specific to demonstrate clearly the small learning steps which they make.

The quality of care, guidance and support is exemplary. Excellent relationships are evident throughout the centre and staff are highly sensitive to pupils' individual needs and challenging circumstances. As a result, these vulnerable pupils feel very safe, well cared for and learn well. For example, one pupil commented on the pupil questionnaire that 'I really enjoy school because the teacher always makes me welcome and she is very caring'. Excellent links with medical and nursing staff support pupils' progress very well and ensure that safeguarding procedures are extremely rigorous. Pupils' behaviour is impressive. They try extremely hard in lessons and have an excellent understanding of what they can do to try to improve their health.

The management committee rightly recognises that, while it provides support, it does not always challenge the centre as fully as it might do. However, in the short time in which she has been in post, the headteacher has made a very significant impact on the quality of provision. All the action points raised at the previous inspection have been well addressed and effective systems to monitor teaching are now well established. Teachers are more fully involved in evaluating how well the centre is doing and planning for future development. As a result, the centre has a good understanding of its strengths and has identified clearly what it needs to do to improve further. The centre is effectively using innovative strategies such as 'videoconferencing' to link the two school bases together and ensure that the quality of provision is consistently good. For these reasons the centre has demonstrated that it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the tracking of progress made by pupils who have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
 - revising the daily record sheets to give a clearer focus on progress made in achieving specific targets
 - improving the way in which photographic records are used to record progress.

- Improve the capacity of the management committee to effectively fulfil its role as a critical friend by:
 - putting into practice, and monitoring the impact of, the recent training on effective ways to challenge and support the centre
 - arranging for members of the committee to visit the school bases and talk to staff so that they are more familiar with the work of the centre
 - ensuring that committee meetings provide a good framework for critical challenge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Because the centre admits pupils across the full ability range, and many only stay for a very short while, attainment varies widely. However, because teaching is consistently good or better, all pupils achieve well. Consequently, some long stay pupils gain good GCSE results including passes at A and A* grades. Pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities now make good progress because teachers have become skilled at using high quality resources to engage them effectively in learning. An example of this was during a good lesson delivered at a pupil's bedside. Despite having very complex learning difficulties, including sensory impairment, the pupil responded well to music and light stimulation, smiling and remaining alert. Parents praise the expertise of the centre in enabling pupils to keep up with their schoolwork so that they transfer confidently back to school. Pupils are very sensitive to each other's needs and say that they get on well together. They try their very best to keep as healthy as they can. For example, a pupil with a chronic health condition negotiated his timetable with staff to include a variety of sports as he wished to keep himself as fit as possible. Attendance is good. The focus on developing key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and access to careers advice prepares pupils well for adult life. Pupils make a good contribution to life in the hospital by, for example, helping to improve the grounds through tree planting. Although pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good because of the focus on supporting their emotional health, they are less well prepared to live in a culturally diverse society. The centre has plans in place to address this.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers consistently deliver stimulating lessons where pupils are challenged well, while at the same time remaining highly alert to the pupils' health and emotional needs. The excellent links with medical and nursing staff ensure that the pace of work is carefully managed. For example, in an outstanding geography lesson, a pupil recovering from surgery made outstanding progress because the teacher gave him rest breaks and presented materials in such a way as to minimise his physical exertion. Pupils are involved well in setting and reviewing their targets for learning. However, sometimes targets, especially those for pupils with more complex needs, are not specific enough. Pupils say that lessons are 'fun' because the centre provides an interesting variety of activities. Despite the restrictions posed by the hospital environment, there are some good practical opportunities. This is evident, for instance, in the lively artwork produced by the pupils which decorates the wards. Individual tutor time ensures that pupils receive excellent support and guidance. Pupils' health and safety are promoted extremely well. For example, teachers and support staff are scrupulous in keeping educational resources clean to prevent cross-infection.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is extremely successful in ensuring that staff at the two hospital sites work together as a united team with a strong sense of purpose. Morale is high and the quality of monitoring and evaluation has improved a great deal since the previous inspection. This has resulted in better teaching and learning. Members of the new management committee have now received training to enable them to play a more effective role in supporting the headteacher in her determined drive for improvement. Since the centre has been given its own budget, it has demonstrated that, through prudent planning, it deploys resources effectively to provide good value for money. Equality of opportunity is promoted well because staff do all they can to maximise opportunities for every pupil. However, the centre does not yet evaluate in sufficient detail the progress made by different groups of pupils. The centre has prepared a good action plan to promote community cohesion. However, strategies in the plan, such as linking with other schools through a videoconferencing project, are still at an early stage of implementation. The centre works extremely closely with medical and nursing staff in relation to safeguarding. Excellent safeguarding procedures are in place, which are rigorous and very well established. They fully meet government requirements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Seventy-five per cent of parents and carers returned the parental questionnaires.

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Parents are very positive about the centre. They feel that their children are well supported and as a result are happy, safe and making good progress. For example, one parent wrote: 'The schools are very caring and good at supporting my child. They have also helped in the past to arrange Link education after surgery.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at the Hospital Education Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspector received 9 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 12 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	78	2	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	6	67	3	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	56	4	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



25 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of the Hospital Education Centre, Exeter, EX2 5DW

Thank you for making me so welcome at the centre. I enjoyed talking to you and reading your questionnaires. It was very useful to know what you think about the centre. I am really glad that you feel very well cared for and safe. I agree with you that the centre provides you with a good education.

There are some things that are particularly good about the centre. These include:

- the outstanding care, guidance and support that you are given, which include excellent procedures to ensure your health and safety
- the excellent way in which the centre staff link with the medical and nursing staff to plan your provision
- your very good behaviour and the excellent efforts that you make to keep as healthy as possible.

I have asked the centre to do two things to make the provision even better:

- to improve the way in which teachers track the progress of those pupils who have very complex special educational needs
- to improve the contribution of the management committee so that it gives more support and challenge to the headteacher.

I hope that you continue to enjoy your time at the centre and give the staff as much support as possible.

Yours sincerely

Christine Emerson
Lead Inspector

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