



The Hospital Education Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134859
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 294187
Inspection date 16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Charles Hackett

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

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| Type of school | Special | School address | CO Divisional Education Office Bradninch Hall, Castle Street Exeter EX4 3PJ |
| School category | Pupil referral unit | Telephone number | 01392 383918 |
| Age range of pupils | 5-16 | Fax number | 01392 384721 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Chair | David Regis |
| Number on roll (school) | 10 | Headteacher | Anne Harrison |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | | |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Hospital Education Centre provides education for pupils admitted to either The Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital or The North Devon District Hospital. The Centre therefore provides for pupils with a wide range of different abilities, including some with statements of special educational need. The Centre does not cater for pre-school-aged pupils (Foundation Stage) or post-16 students. Many pupils stay at the hospital for less than seven days, although there are other pupils who are regularly readmitted or are in hospital for longer periods. The number of pupils varies considerably each week up to a maximum of 50 pupils. The Centre has teaching bases in each hospital. Pupils are either taught in these or at their bedsides. The Centre manager has recently left and currently the Centre is being managed by the education officer for alternative provision while the local authority considers how it will operate in the future.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The quality of education provided by the Hospital Education Centre is good with some outstanding features. A key strength is the excellent commitment and flexibility of teachers to meet the very wide range of ages and differing needs of the pupils. Care, support and guidance for pupils are outstanding and as a result the personal development of pupils is excellent. Pupils enjoy being in the teaching bases and visibly relax because of the 'therapeutic effect' being there has on them. Parents unanimously confirm that their children grow in confidence and this undoubtedly helps them deal with the many challenges they face in relation to their health. Many commented that being able to continue with their studies helps bring normality to their lives. Excellent working relationships exist between the teachers and the medical and nursing staff. Through these, each child's needs are being met in a 'holistic manner'. 'Here, there is real working together,' stressed the senior consultant paediatrician for the ward in praising the work of the teaching team.

Standards are below average but can vary considerably with an ever changing population. Pupils' achievements are good no matter how long they stay in the hospital. This is because the quality of teaching is good, as is the curriculum provided. Pupils in hospital for a short time are able to continue with their studies because the work they are given is carefully linked to what they would have been doing back in their mainstream schools. Pupils whose illnesses mean they are regularly admitted to hospital make good progress because the teachers ensure that the work builds on what they have done previously. Teachers go to great lengths to try to meet the needs of those pupils who have statements of special educational need. For example, all teachers have developed basic skills in signing. There are, though, some limitations in the accommodation and resources available for pupils with complex (including sensory) difficulties and disabilities. This limits the specialist strategies that teachers can use to meet their needs.

Leadership and management are good. This is clearly shown by the manner in which teachers are able to continue their good work even though the permanent Centre manager has recently left. Good systems are in place to develop resources and to build up training in each of the subject areas. Subject leaders are playing a key part in this but their observations of each other teaching, as well as those of the Centre manager, are not frequent enough, nor are they used effectively to improve the quality of teaching even further. The management committee plays its part well in supporting the work of the Centre. Through regular meetings and very thorough reports, they have gained a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Centre.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the provision, including the specialised resources available for the teaching of pupils with complex learning difficulties and/or sensory impairments.
- Increase the frequency and improve the effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below average but there can be considerable variation because of the very wide range of abilities and ages and constantly changing population. However, there is clear evidence that pupils make good progress while attending the Centre because teaching and the curriculum are well matched to pupils' needs. This good progress is shown in the way in which pupils of all ages successfully achieve their weekly targets. An analysis of these on each site shows that almost all targets are being regularly met. Weaknesses within the accommodation and resources, though, slow the rates of progress for those pupils with more complex needs and sensory impairments.

Older pupils are well supported in completing course work and this enables them to pass examinations. As one parent put it, 'Without the support of the Education Centre, my child would not have been able to pass the GCSEs that she has.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Considerable attention is given to supporting pupils' emotional well-being and as a result their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. They feel safe and enjoy coming in to the teaching bases and engaging in the many learning activities such as small group discussions. They are relaxed and enthusiastic learners. Their excellent attendance and behaviour in the teaching bases testifies to this. They work well with each other and with adults. Pupils know they are listened to because they are fully involved in deciding their curriculum and in negotiating their targets. Pupils also develop a good understanding of the importance of living healthily. As one primary-aged pupil said, 'I know that I should be having five pieces of fruit or vegetables every day.' Through the efforts of the Centre, pupils are confident and well prepared to return to mainstream or move on to further education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The excellent flexibility shown by all teachers in seeking to meet the needs and different ages of pupils is a major strength of the quality of work of the Hospital Education Centre. Teachers go to great lengths to seek out suitable resources and materials to meet the very wide range of courses they need to cover. As a result, pupils stick closely to the work they would be doing in mainstream. Teachers are receptive to the support provided by specialist local authority staff and this means they are fully up-to-date with the national strategies designed to improve the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching and learning is being further improved through a well developed plan to

make more use of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils particularly enjoy their learning through the use of interactive whiteboards.

Typically, the planning of lessons is good and shows how teachers are trying to address the individual needs of each child and ensure that they make progress through achieving their targets. A good start has been made in developing specialist skills needed for teaching pupils with statements of special educational need, such as the use of signing. However, due to the shortage of space and resources, other more specialist approaches are limited.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum offered by the Centre is a tribute to the efforts of staff who have managed to do this despite the limitations the accommodation places upon them. A very good range of materials ensures that the curriculum is appropriate for the different ages of pupils within the Centre. A particularly striking feature is the excellent range of books available, which proves very effective in capturing the interest of pupils, either for the topics they are studying or reading for pleasure. These resources are supplemented by good links with mainstream schools which ensure that work provided for pupils is at an appropriate level.

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught incidentally across the curriculum and there is a need for a more structured programme to ensure pupils cover as many aspects as possible. The accommodation does limit the types of programmes that can be offered, for example, there is very limited space to offer a more multi-sensory curriculum that would benefit pupils with complex needs and/or sensory impairments. Specialised resources for these pupils are also limited. There are some excellent enrichment opportunities such as music and ceramics workshops, which evidence suggests are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding relationships that teachers have with pupils are the basis of the very high quality of care, support and guidance provided. All pupils have tutors and these ensure that careful attention is given to the programmes of each individual pupil. The very close links with medical and nursing staff ensure that a very sensitive approach is taken in relation to the expectations placed on pupils and the pace of work is carefully managed. Academic guidance for pupils is highly appropriate. Weekly targets and the review of these fully involves pupils and contributes to the enjoyment they have with their learning. Safeguarding procedures within the Centre are very stringent. Close liaison with the nursing staff ensures that very careful risk assessments are undertaken to ensure that pupils are not put at risk. This is particularly the case in making certain that there is no cross-infection when students with different illnesses make use of the teaching bases.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Although the Centre has recently lost its permanent Centre manager, this has not impacted on the quality of the provision and the achievements of pupils. This is because of the very strong teamwork developed amongst the teachers. They support each other very well. For example, subject leaders assist their colleagues in developing resources and accessing training. They also work very effectively in partnership with hospital staff. Less effective, though, is the support provided for teaching and learning through lesson observations. These are too infrequent and there is an insufficient focus on how improvements can be made in the reporting of them.

The management committee has supported the work of the Centre well through regular meetings and reports. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and use this well to support an effective self-evaluation process. This has identified weaker aspects, such as the use of ICT, and ensured that improvements are being made. This demonstrates that the Centre has the capacity for good improvement.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | NA |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I recently visited your Centre, together with my colleague Julia Coop. It was a pleasure to meet some of you and your comments have helped us understand the work of the Centre. We both feel that the Hospital Education Centre provides you with a good quality of education and that it has outstanding features. We feel that as a result of this you all make excellent progress with your personal development. This is because the quality of care and support provided by the staff for you is also excellent. We can see that you feel safe in the Centre and that you are being well prepared for your future education. Teachers treat you as individuals and do everything they can to support you. They do this through very good cooperation with the medical staff and with the nursing staff. It is because of these efforts that you achieve well. We know this because of the success you have in achieving your weekly targets and completing the course work many of you bring from your mainstream schools.

We think that the curriculum and the quality of teaching are both good and play an important part in helping you to enjoy attending the Centre. The Centre is managed well and all the teachers support each other impressively. This ensures you are provided with the materials you need in order to continue with your studies.

To make the Centre even better, there are two aspects we have asked the Centre to consider. First, to look at ways in which it could provide even more for those of you who have sensory impairments or find learning very difficult. Second, the Centre can improve the way the quality of teaching and learning is checked and how teachers are advised as to how they might develop their skills even more.

We know you enjoy your work in the Centre and we hope you continue to do so.