

Huntercombe Hospital School (Maidenhead)

Huntercombe Lane South, Taplow, Maidenhead SL6 0PQ

Inspection dates

5–7 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders and staff have successfully established the school as a haven of learning that supports pupils' recovery and restores their self-belief.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers are dedicated to improving pupils' life-chances. They have excellent subject knowledge, plan lessons carefully with pupils' individual abilities in mind and are responsive to their changing needs.
- Pupils behave well. They have good relationships with their teachers and try hard to participate and catch up with their learning.
- Leaders have made sure that all the independent school standards are met consistently.
- School leaders monitor teaching and pupils' performance with determination. As a result, teaching has improved and continues to go from strength to strength.
- Pupils are safe in the school. Their welfare, physical health and emotional well-being are completely central to everyone's work. Highly trained staff take prompt action to protect pupils from risk of harm.
- School leaders and teachers ensure that there is good communication with pupils' home schools, so that appropriate work is provided to enable pupils to keep up with their studies.
- There is a strong focus on promoting pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Regular events and projects help pupils to recover and contemplate a positive future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The sixth-form provision requires improvement. The programme of study, opportunities for work experience and careers advice and guidance are in their infancy and underdeveloped.
- Some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should, even when they are well enough.
- School leaders' expectations of how hospital staff should support pupils in lessons are not clear.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the provision for sixth-form students, so it matches what is seen elsewhere in the school, by:
 - strengthening leadership
 - ensuring that students make more direct and consistent use of teachers' expertise and subject knowledge to support them with their own studies
 - developing a programme of study, opportunities for work experience and a wider range of careers advice and guidance to prepare students more thoroughly for their next steps.
- Ensure that pupils and students attend school as regularly as they can, when they are well enough.
- Establish clear and consistent expectations about the way in which hospital staff support pupils in lessons, in order to encourage their participation and motivation.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher leads and manages the school with boundless energy and determination. She knows the pupils extremely well and has a deep understanding of the difficulties they experience, as a result of their illness. She is rightly focused on ensuring that the school provides as normal as possible an education and that teaching is of good quality.
- The headteacher has ensured that expectations are high. She and the teaching staff understandably have to maintain a delicate balance between, on the one hand, gently pushing pupils to attend school and keep up with their studies, and on the other hand, making sure that their recovery is not compromised by anxiety or excessive study.
- The headteacher and head of education have ensured that all the independent school standards are met and that the school is improving rapidly.
- The school liaises closely with hospital staff and parents to make sure that pupils have the right care and support. Link teachers, who work closely with pupils' home schools and the clinical team quickly acquire a profound insight into pupils' individual difficulties, which enables them to develop appropriate plans for each pupil admitted to the hospital.
- The varying timetables for the different units operating in the school work well. Whether pupils are in the secure unit, or in the open unit, leaders make sure that teaching is adapted to maximise the opportunities for pupils to participate.
- Pupils up to Year 11 are able to study a broad range of subjects across the curriculum. They all study English, mathematics and science. They participate in physical education, are able to take humanities subjects, art and music, and learn important life skills through personal, social and health education. Teachers are on hand to support students with any subject they are studying as part of the programme.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well. They raise money for charity and take part in school visits, sports days and the annual hospital fete. They have a good understanding of British values; tolerance of diversity and different backgrounds and beliefs is embedded in attitudes and principles across the school. Pupils have also actively learned about democracy by undertaking a mock EU referendum campaign.
- Pupils' progress is assessed closely all the time. Regular checks on their mental health functioning provide a clear indication of how their time in school is contributing to their overall recovery. In addition, a lesson-by-lesson assessment system tracks how well pupils are achieving the aim for the lesson and responding to teaching. The headteacher regularly surveys pupils' responses and the teachers' evaluations to check how well pupils are progressing.
- The introduction of entry-level qualifications for literacy and numeracy has brought about a welcome endorsement of pupils' ability and progress. Pupils really value their certificates; their self-esteem improves and a set of qualifications opens doors to further education for them.
- Parents who contributed to Parent View and who spoke to Her Majesty's Inspector were extremely positive about the school and the work it is doing to educate and nurture their children.
- The headteacher monitors the work of teachers in the school carefully. She regularly observes lessons, carries out detailed appraisals of teachers' performance and provides helpful written and informal feedback on their work. Teachers also benefit from regular supervision to help them deal with the challenges of working with pupils with severe mental health difficulties. Teachers attend valuable training to improve their practice and to learn about different special educational needs, such as autism. However, there are not enough opportunities for teachers to come together to share good practice and learn from each other. Teachers' targets are focused on tasks to complete rather than on what will make the most difference to the pupils.
- While the headteacher and head of education have successfully liaised with hospital managers to set up the school in the hospital premises, there is not a consistent protocol for the healthcare assistants when they accompany pupils to school. Expectations are not always clear and, as a result, adults accompanying or observing pupils do not contribute enough to their learning and participation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There is no governance as such in the school. The head of education is charged by the Huntercombe proprietors to oversee the work of the headteacher and the school along with the other hospital schools in the Huntercombe group. He is based on site and provides valuable critical support for the headteacher and shares her vision for the school. The head of education regularly visits the

schoolrooms to observe lessons, look at pupils' work and evaluate the difference made to pupils' outcomes.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils' safety and well-being are top priority and rightly take precedence over everything else in the school. Most pupils are very unwell and extremely vulnerable to risk of harm or self-harm. As a result, all staff are highly vigilant and alert to small changes or signals. They know the pupils extremely well. The headteacher has wisely put a programme in place to provide safeguarding training at a high level for all staff.
- Leaders have made sure that all checks on staff working with pupils have been carried out thoroughly. At the start of the inspection, there were some minor administrative errors in the single central record of the checks made on staff working in the school. Her Majesty's Inspector was able to confirm that the school had made all the required checks, and the record was updated correctly by the end of the inspection.
- School leaders' responses to any serious incidents are prompt and effective. For example, risk assessments related to rooms and equipment are promptly reviewed and updated to minimise any danger to pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers plan lessons carefully with pupils' needs at the forefront. They get to know pupils extremely well in a very short time and skilfully adapt activities, according to how well and responsive pupils are.
- Teachers work adeptly with pupils, directing their attention fairly and effectively to support those who need it most, while sensitively checking pupils who are working on their own.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and, as a result, pupils have confidence in their teachers. Accomplished questioning and probing of pupils' understanding elicit useful information about what pupils already know, understand and can do. For some pupils, their stay at the hospital will be more prolonged. In these cases, teachers make effective use of their prior learning to plan further work.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and friendly, but also focused on learning. Teachers genuinely enjoy working with the pupils and deeply care about helping them to succeed.
- Teachers explain ideas and concepts clearly and patiently. They 'think on their feet' and adjust what they are doing or saying to match and challenge pupils' responses. They make good use of well-prepared practical materials and textbooks and also provide compelling analogies related to pupils' own experiences.
- Teachers provide useful verbal and written feedback on pupils' work and progress. Teachers are typically encouraging and affirmative, which is especially important when some pupils are overly self-critical. Equally, teachers make sure that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils working independently on work set by their home schools are thoughtfully supported by their teachers. Similarly, teachers are tactful and discreet with those pupils who are tentatively involving themselves in lessons for the first time after a serious period of illness or gaps in their previous education. In this way, pupils are coaxed back to education in a gentle and compassionate way.
- Teachers do not make the most of opportunities to challenge the most able pupils. They are understandably mindful of not wanting to set a pupil back by pushing too hard. However, this approach sometimes errs on the side of being too cautious when pupils could actually achieve a little more.
- Healthcare assistants employed by the hospital frequently accompany pupils to lessons in order to support or observe. Although they are not appointed as teaching assistants, expectations of their role in the lesson are not clear or consistent. In some cases, they provide valuable encouragement and moral support for pupils. However, on occasion, they contribute very little and sometimes disrupt the studious classroom atmosphere by chatting with their colleagues, unintentionally undermining the importance of learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Restoring and developing pupils' confidence, self-belief and esteem are central to the school's purpose.

- Staff achieve a careful balance between fostering pupils' pride in work and conscientious habits and ensuring that their diligence does not spill over into excessive studying. Nevertheless, pupils try hard and understand that their resilience and stamina are important. Most are very self-motivated and determined to overcome their difficulties.
- Pupils enjoy their relationships with staff and know that they are there to help them. They value opportunities to attend trips and visits and take part in regular celebratory events. As a more formal structure of classes and year groups has become established in the school, pupils are able to form closer friendships and bonds with each other.
- Pupils also make the most of opportunities to learn about their health and safety in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Careful attention to every aspect of pupils' welfare and safety is threaded through all activities and the curriculum, including safe use of the internet and social media.
- The school is working hard to ensure that pupils are as well motivated about all the subjects on offer as they are with their examination subjects from their home schools. Nevertheless, a few pupils are reluctant to participate fully in subjects that they regard as less important.
- Careful planning for pupils' next steps enables most to progress to college, home or university. However, the school has rightly identified that more wide-ranging advice and guidance would provide better support for older pupils and those who are well enough to be integrated back into mainstream education at a further or higher level.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- There are very few instances of bullying or use of derogatory language. Similarly, there have been very few serious behavioural incidents since the school was registered.
- Pupils are typically friendly, if a little self-conscious and wary of visitors. They are polite and considerate towards staff and each other. They are generally positive about the importance of school, look after the building and resources and take pride in their work.
- The school takes a caring and common sense approach to attendance at school, recognising that many pupils may genuinely not be well enough to participate in all lessons. However, a few pupils do not attend as well as they could when they are feeling better. In some cases, this is because the school's expectations of attendance for older pupils are not clear enough.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- When pupils are admitted to the hospital and to the school, they have typically missed a lot of education. For some pupils, their ability to learn has been impaired by their poor mental health. As a result, most pupils are working at a lower level than might be suggested by their ability. The school focuses on helping pupils to catch up, regain their confidence, acquire some skills and, where possible, gain qualifications.
- For many pupils, it is not a smooth journey to restored health and academic achievement. However, as a consequence of the care and high-quality teaching they receive, pupils make good progress in their studies and also their mental health.
- Pupils make particularly good progress from their different starting points in English and mathematics. They benefit from the opportunity to sit functional skills examinations in literacy and numeracy. Even though this level of qualification is lower than most pupils' ability, it is well regarded by pupils and parents because it is a gateway to catching up and restoring faith in their ability to succeed.
- The key factor in each pupil's progress is their illness, which affects their rates of attendance at school, motivation for learning and ability to study. For those who are well enough, there is very little difference in their rates of progress, whether they are among the very few pupils with education, health and care plans or who are looked after by the local authority. The school's personalised approach ensures that if pupils are capable of learning and attending, they progress well and start to catch up.
- Pupils begin work very productively. They participate well in lessons, even when anxious, ask questions and respond well to praise and challenge. Pupils achieve well in a range of subjects, including geography, science and religious studies. They produce accomplished artwork and appreciate seeing their work on display.
- In a very few cases, the most able pupils struggle to produce as much work as they could. In these

instances, it is clear that some pupils will need to develop staying power as they recover from their illnesses.

- Pupils read well and widely. Teachers make sure that they have access to challenging books that make them think about the wider world.
- Through their study of literacy, numeracy and the full breadth of the curriculum, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils are able to apply their knowledge and skills in different real-life situations, which stands them in good stead for whatever they might do next.

Sixth-form provision

requires improvement

- Provision in the sixth form is not as good as elsewhere in the school. The school does not provide a dedicated study programme or systematic access to appropriate work experience for those students who are well enough. Advice and guidance about higher education, next steps and career choices are too limited.
- Students at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form do not all attend school as well as they could and therefore miss out on opportunities to keep up their studies. School leaders have not made clear what their expectations of attendance are, and some students consider that they have left school. As a result, students who are likely to be staying in hospital for a longer period do not benefit from increased time to study in school.
- Students who do attend the sixth form focus on work set by their home schools. Although they have access to support and a calm and orderly place in which to study, there is not enough provision or time dedicated to specialist guidance.
- School leaders rightly acknowledge that it is early days and that the sixth-form provision needs to be developed. For example, they are aware that they do not currently offer sufficiently wide-ranging careers advice and guidance for older students.
- Firm plans are in place to improve the sixth form, including strengthening leadership through the appointment of a deputy headteacher, firming up expectations about attendance and developing more appropriate study and work experience programmes to maximise progress and students' self-confidence. There are clear signs that school leaders' forward planning is having a positive impact on students' motivation and optimism.
- School leaders and staff take careful consideration of students' progress and make sure that they have the chance to repeat Year 11, take suitable external examinations and, where appropriate, build up their confidence in English and mathematics by taking functional skills qualifications.
- Students are safe in the sixth form. As a result of the careful attention given to personal well-being and safety throughout the school, any concerns about students are acted upon promptly to minimise any risk of harm.
- Students in the sixth form work supportively alongside younger pupils. Relationships are strong with each other and with staff, and students appreciate what staff do to support them. They enjoy contributing to school events and demonstrate increasing maturity and self-awareness as they recover from their illnesses.

School details

Unique reference number	142325
Inspection number	10012889
DfE registration number	868/6023

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special school – social, emotional and mental health needs
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	18
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Huntercombe Group
Chair	Nicholas Rose (Head of Education – Child, Adolescent, Mental Health Services)
Headteacher	Angela Hudgell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,950
Telephone number	01628607435
Website	No school website
Email address	hhmaidenheadschoo@huntercombe.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Huntercombe Hospital School (Maidenhead) is an independent special school situated within Huntercombe Hospital. The school was registered with Ofsted in September 2015 to cater for up to 60 boys and girls aged 12 to 18. All pupils have severe mental health difficulties and illnesses.
- Pupils are admitted and discharged throughout the year. Some stay a short time and some will remain at the hospital and school for longer. Many pupils arrive at the school, having had disruption to their education. Some have missed many months or even years of formal education, owing to their illness.
- Most pupils remain dual registered in their time at the school. Their home schools provide work for them to complete, in addition to a timetable offered by the Huntercombe Hospital School. This equates to a full-time education.
- The school aims for 'a positive experience, where the education provided here is as normal as possible, in what can seem a very abnormal situation.'
- The school caters for four units in the hospital, including two secure units. There are five classrooms: three in the main hospital and two in the secure unit. Pupils are broadly grouped according to their key stage.
- Very few pupils have education, health and care plans or a statement of special educational needs. There

are four pupils who are looked after by their local authorities. The school does not receive any additional funding for these pupils.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Huntercombe Hospital School (Maidenhead) has not been previously inspected.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons, seven of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the head of education, teaching staff and the hospital social worker.
- The inspector spoke to two parents on the telephone and considered the views of three parents who contributed their views to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Six responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. The inspector carried out a tour of the school premises, including the secure units. A range of documents was scrutinised, including required policies, records of the checks made on staff, curriculum planning and records of behaviour and attendance. The school's tracking of pupils' progress, both in lessons and of their mental health, was evaluated.
- The inspector looked at a range of pupils' work and spoke to them in lessons.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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