

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr B Bangay
Headteacher
The Children's Hospital School
Leicester Royal Infirmary
Leicester
LE1 5WW

Dear Mr Bangay

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 and 4 February 2010 to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit included some discussion on our current survey theme of provision for gifted and talented pupils in English.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of four lessons; and a tour of the school's facilities at the hospital.

This special school provides for children and young people aged from 3 to 16 with medical needs in wards across two hospitals, as outreach provision in their homes and in a day school located on the site of a primary school. The school also provides education for in-patients at a psychiatric unit. This aspect was not part of the inspection visit. Pupils remain on the roll of their previous school.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- In 2009, GCSE results of Year 11 pupils were broadly in line with those nationally and above average when medical needs are taken into account.

- Pupils in other year groups have attainment which ranges from below level 1 across all National Curriculum levels according to their age, specific needs, attendance pattern at school and medical condition.
- Pupils make at least good progress from their starting points in relation to the period of time they are taught by the school, which can vary from a few days to more than a year. Pupils in the day school make very good progress and most Year 11 pupils in 2009 met or exceeded the challenging targets set for them by their mainstream school.
- Pupils are supported exceptionally well to overcome barriers to their attendance and learning. Programmes are individually matched to pupils' needs, especially in the hospital and outreach service. Many make significant progress in their confidence, self-esteem and attitude to learning because of the focused personal support from a variety of staff.
- In the sessions observed, pupils were engaged and interested, and worked well with their teachers because of excellent relationships. Most participated in discussions even when it was clear that they found this difficult. They showed very good understanding of subject terms and picked up concepts quickly across the range of provision.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teachers show very good subject knowledge across a range of key stages. They plan thoroughly for individuals and small groups, ensuring that work is well-matched to needs. They set high expectations.
- The best teaching has clear objectives and lessons have a brisk pace. Teachers encourage pupils to participate and to expand on their views. However, this was not the case in all lessons. Tasks are well-focused and help pupils to apply what they have learnt.
- Pupils are assessed immediately on contact with the school, using a range of information and tasks. This assessment leads to programmes which are matched carefully to pupils' needs, whether they are taught for a few days or attend the day school for longer periods.
- Teachers mark pupils' work in detail and identify key areas for improvement, including basic skills.
- Pupils value the individual support that they receive and the opportunities for oral work and reflective or creative writing.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Long-term plans cover the National Curriculum requirements in each key stage. This core of planning enables teachers to adapt individual programmes to meet pupils' needs in relation to their age and current level of attainment. Programmes for hospital and outreach work are

extremely flexible to ensure that pupils are supported in improving weaker skills.

- Pupils in Key Stage 4 are entered for a wide range of qualifications including basic and key skills alongside GCSE. All Year 11 pupils left with qualifications in 2009. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is less reflective of the revised guidance published nationally, particularly in relation to drama, media and modern communications.
- Literacy skills are taught and promoted very effectively through other subjects, allowing pupils to apply oral and written skills, often in real contexts such as applications for college or presentations in assemblies.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- The subject leader has a very clear vision for English which is adapted effectively for the range of pupils catered for by the school.
- The team of teachers work closely together, receiving regular training. Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate successfully in planning and assessment to ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately.
- The subject action plan is well-focused and reflects changing priorities. The subject leader monitors provision carefully and record-keeping is thorough, including regular updates on pupils' progress.

Provision for gifted and talented pupils in English

- The school recognises pupils who are gifted and talented. Programmes ensure that they are suitably challenged and, each year, some achieve the higher grades at GCSE. There are also opportunities for enrichment such as work with a local newspaper and representation on groups.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- broadening the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 3, by:
 - taking opportunities to plan for creative learning in conjunction with other subjects
 - increasing pupils' access to modern media and communications
 - using aspects of drama more regularly to aid learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school. As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector