

# Mary Hare School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110180
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	376181
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Duffy HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.  
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	233
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	74
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Granatt
<b>Principal</b>	Tony Shaw
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10–11 December 2008
<b>School address</b>	Arlington Manor Snelsmore Common Newbury RG14 3BQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01635 244 200
<b>Fax number</b>	01635 248 019
<b>Email address</b>	school@maryhare.co.uk

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<b>Boarding provision</b>	Mary Hare School
<b>Social care Unique Reference Number</b>	SC011137
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Lucy Martin HMI

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<b>Age group</b>	4–19
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	29–30 June 2011
<b>Inspection number</b>	376181

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors, two additional inspectors and one additional social care inspector. They observed 14 lessons or parts of lessons and 14 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils, members of the governing body and spoke to parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation and policies, including the school's tracking of pupils' progress, the school development plan and arrangements for safeguarding. They also studied pupil and staff questionnaires and the 50 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The contribution made by curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to students' enjoyment and personal development, as well as their academic achievement.
- The contribution of all staff and the governing body to the continuing improvement of the school.
- The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers.
- The effectiveness of the school's leadership of, and arrangements for, boarding.

## Information about the school

Mary Hare School caters for pupils and students who have levels of deafness ranging from moderate to profound and who, on entry to the secondary school, are selected on assessed potential to benefit from the school's approach. They attend the school from all parts of the United Kingdom and nearly all are boarders. All have a statement of special educational needs. The secondary department is the largest and is on the same campus as the sixth form provision; the primary provision is on a separate site a few miles away. Approximately 25% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and for 15%, English is an additional language. When there are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they are taught within the youngest Key Stage 1 class. The school has specialist status for physical and sensory needs and is a training school giving support to teachers of the deaf at both a local and national level. The school holds a number of awards, including national Healthy Schools status.

At the time of the inspection, many of the pupils were taking exams, were out of school on field or activity trips or, in the case of Years 11 and 13, had returned home.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Mary Hare School is an outstanding school in which an outstanding curriculum enables its pupils and students to both enjoy school and make excellent progress. Overall, their achievement is outstanding. The school has a strong focus upon raising pupils' expectations of themselves and what they can achieve. As one pupil said, 'You can achieve a lot of things here'. This approach has evident impact, so that aspirations are high and pupils work hard to succeed across a range of subjects and across all departments of the school. However, the school's focus on academic achievement does not detract from other areas of development. The school's specialism and the wide range of social, artistic and sporting opportunities enable all pupils to find something at which they can excel or which engages their interest and enthusiasm. Boarding makes a strong contribution to the pupils' positive experience of school and the recent appointment of two joint heads of care has had noticeable impact. Increased liaison between boarding and school departments supports pupils' social and emotional development well. However, this relies rather too heavily upon informal arrangements between care and education staff, and systems to ensure evaluated joint working are not fully in place.

The monitoring of teaching is rigorous and staff, like the pupils, are expected to set and reach challenging targets. As a result, lessons are very well-paced and engaging. Pupils are clear about the levels at which they are working and good relationships mean that they are confident about asking for help when necessary. Specialist teaching approaches and equipment are used very effectively and support staff, who include audiologists and therapists as well as teaching assistants, make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning and progress.

There have been some changes to the governing body since the last inspection and the school has faced some challenges, both financial and to its reputation, during the past year. The need to address these issues has delayed to some extent the intentions of the governing body to hold the school more closely to account and to make its work more evident to parents and carers as well as to staff. As a result, its impact upon continuing school improvement has not been as strong as it could be. Until recently, self-evaluation and the monitoring of the school's effectiveness have relied too heavily on reports from the senior management team, rather than the involvement of all concerned. As a result, not all staff feel that they have been fully engaged in this process. Nevertheless, the school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and has made a number of significant improvements since the last inspection. There is good capacity for sustained

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improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen the effectiveness of all departments by:
  - formalising the processes that are in place to support links across education and boarding, so that the school is more able to evaluate their impact
  - ensuring that staff at all levels have an opportunity to contribute to the evaluation and continuing improvement of the school.
- Ensure that the governing body acts upon its intentions to take a more active role in the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and engagement with its stakeholders.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Their levels of attainment when they join the school are well below average overall, but are generally in line with national averages when they finish Year 11. This represents outstanding progress for these pupils, all of whom have special educational needs relating to their deafness. Success in English language, which is a focus for the school, is notable. The school has taken effective action to ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with specific literacy needs are not disadvantaged, so they make progress which is similar to that of other pupils. It has also correctly identified pupils for whom progress can be further accelerated and taken action very effectively to offer challenge and extension activities for this group. Pupils respond particularly well to the range of resources available to them. For example, a class of Year 12 media arts students were able to make excellent progress through very well-taught use of the technology involved. At the other end of the age range, pupils in a Key Stage 2 science lesson made full use of pictures and stories to explore the lifecycle of a butterfly.

Pupils are extremely proud of their school and appreciate the range of opportunities which it offers. They appreciate the good relationships they have with members of staff and this adds to their feeling of safety within school. The very large majority of pupils are involved and enthusiastic, and their motivation to succeed is evident. They are aware of how much behaviour impacts upon learning so that behaviour in lessons is excellent. Pupils respond well to opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work. They show a very good understanding of the level they are working at and what they are aiming for. They respond extremely well to specialist teaching approaches and feel confident that teaching and support staff are there to help them if necessary. As so many of the school population are boarders, attendance is not an issue overall but it has been affected for some pupils by extended illness or the need to attend hospital appointments.

Reflecting the school's Healthy Schools status, pupils take advantage of the many

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opportunities to participate in sport and to eat healthily. The school is aware that some pupils have been less clear about other aspects of healthy living, such as those connected with personal relationships. It has rightly taken steps to address this through more focused personal, social and health education.

The strong student council ensures that pupils have many avenues in which to contribute to the community and make their opinions known. 'Every pupil can speak through us,' said one member, who also explained how charity prefects involve others in raising money for different charities. From the primary department upwards, pupils' moral and social development is enhanced by assemblies and they benefit from opportunities to hear from professionals in the community, such as the local police. Spiritual and cultural development is greatly enriched through links with the many arts groups available through the Arlington Arts Centre, as well as sporting and academic partnerships. Such events develop pupils' confidence extremely effectively and they show themselves very willing to work together and support each other, both in these situations and in lessons. Carefully planned work experience placements give Key Stage 4 pupils a clear understanding of the relationship between the educational curriculum and the world of employment. Progress is underpinned by high quality work in mathematics and literacy and by the school's investment in information and communication technology. As a result, pupils develop both the skills and social awareness that will support them very well when they are older.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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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## How effective is the provision?

The school’s specialism has successfully underpinned a recent more structured approach to curriculum development and targeted initiatives have been demonstrably effective. In particular, the ‘accelerated reading’ programme is having a marked impact on improving pupils’ reading performance as well as their enjoyment. Younger pupils benefit from a creative and experience-based approach to the curriculum. For example, pupils in the primary school gained great insight into realities of the food chain by the installation of a web camera close to a nest. Through this, they were not only able to watch eggs hatch but also experience and talk about their feelings when they saw the hatchlings taken by a predatory bird. The range of enrichment activities is excellent. Visits to Europe, America and the Far East are well established and enhance pupils’ real understanding of the world.

Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and present lessons extremely clearly. The support from teaching assistants promotes the progress of pupils with additional learning needs very well. Teachers plan a range of challenging activities for pupils and support them in making at least good, and often outstanding, progress in each lesson. Good use is made of assessment information to provide activities which both challenge and engage the pupils very well. Teachers make full use of the small class sizes to provide ongoing and constructive dialogue to pupils about how they could improve their work. Marking is routinely carried out but, while informing pupils of their grades, it is not always used to provide the ongoing assessment and written advice that supports that given orally.

There are thorough and effective arrangements in place for the care, guidance and support of pupils. A strong commitment to working with a range of agencies to sustain the learning, development and well-being of every pupil is evident. Transition for those joining and leaving the school, and transferring between departments, is very well supported. Pupils say that they are listened to and feel confident in approaching staff with their problems. They are aware of, and use, the well-tailored peer-mentoring system in school. Boarders talk positively about changes to the leadership of the boarding houses, which has given them increased confidence that their views will be heard. However, the school knows that pupils still need to talk to their parents or carers about anything that concerns them, and encourages them to do so.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

The very strong commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, coupled with the drive to ensure that all pupils achieve their best, is evident in all departments of the school. Members of the governing body are rightly proud of the school and share the principal’s determination for its continuing development. The staff as a whole share this commitment, and the focus that all place on the needs of the pupils is clear and extremely effective. Although it provides excellent value for money, a reduction in expected funding has temporarily affected the school’s ability to continue developing as much as it had planned. Coupled with an event which recently placed the school in the media spotlight, this has had an effect, not only on school improvement but also on staff morale. The governing body is rightly taking this into account in drawing up a new and ambitious strategy for the school’s future. The inclusion of the joint heads of care, as well as the head of primary and other senior leaders, has broadened the potential for the senior management team to seek the views of others and allow them now to have a greater influence in the school’s development.

Arrangements for safeguarding have been reviewed and are robust. The school is proactive in engaging key agencies, all staff are well trained and there is a realistic approach to the management of risk. The school has made full use of its specialist status and has used its community partnerships extremely well in order to benefit the pupils. It plays a highly significant role in its local community and further afield through its training activities and links with different groups in the United Kingdom and abroad. It also works hard to involve parents and carers, and rightly has plans to do even more to ensure that they can easily access the information they need in order to feel fully involved in what their children are learning and doing.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

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money

## Early Years Foundation Stage

At the time of the last inspection, the school had just begun to provide for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Since then, there have been very few such children and there were none at the time of the inspection. However, the arrangements to provide an appropriate and exciting experience for young children are well in place. Systems that ensure their welfare are very well established and planning is based upon a comprehensive assessment of each child's needs. These take full account of parents' and carers' views and there is close liaison with them before and after their children start school. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is extremely effective and ensures that all staff are well supported to meet the children's needs.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Sixth form

Students greatly enjoy their time in the sixth form. Recent improvements to the curriculum have enabled them to select from a range of more appropriate vocational courses and gain a wider range of accreditation. The introduction of adult literacy and numeracy programmes has led to an improvement in performance for some students in Year 12. Students are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives, including continuing their education at university. This preparation not only allows the majority to gain good success in their post-16 studies but also gives them excellent social skills.

Progress overall is outstanding. Students grasp every opportunity to take responsible roles, show initiative and develop very good leadership qualities. They also value opportunities to support younger students. As one student said, 'We're expected to be responsible for a lot of activities, and that's great.' Care, guidance and support are very strong features within the sixth form and, as a result, retention rates are high. Those spoken to were full of praise for the help they receive. One student said, 'I never need to walk away with problems. I can always get help.'

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

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<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Boarding provision

The overall quality of the boarding provision at the school is good and there are areas which are outstanding. Boarders enjoy their experience of boarding and feel safe and well supported. There is a strong sense of community amongst boarders, with one saying, 'My boarding house feels like a second home'. Improvements have been made to some key records, such as staff recruitment and the involvement of students in menu planning. These were recommendations made at the last boarding inspection in January 2011.

Boarders' health needs at the school are well met. The school nurse works closely with care staff to promote health education. Regular training in first aid takes place, as well as more specialised areas. Arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are good. The emotional support of pupils is given a high priority and specialist agencies, such as the local deaf children and adolescent mental health service, can provide support.

Pupils are provided with healthy, balanced and nutritious meals. There is a good choice, including a full salad bar. Pupils are consulted over menu planning and a new suggestions box has been placed in the dining room. The catering manager attends the student council to discuss the food and pupils feel that they have their say. One boarder commented that the food provided at supper had recently improved.

There are sound procedures in place for ensuring that boarders are kept safe. Staff show a good understanding of child protection and all incidents are fully recorded and referred to the local authority when appropriate. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and a number of senior staff are trained to an advanced level. Robust staff recruitment checks are carried out and key staff are trained in this area. Boarders say they feel safe in the school and boarding environment. Incidents of bullying are rare and if they do take place, boarders report that they are swiftly and effectively dealt with by staff, who take them seriously. There is an emphasis on promoting positive behaviour and boarders like the boarding house reward scheme. Any sanctions imposed by staff are appropriately recorded, with pupils' views included, and are monitored for effectiveness. Boarders generally feel that sanctions are fair. Health, safety and security matters within the boarding houses are taken seriously. There are routine fire and electrical safety checks and regular fire drills. Boarders with additional support needs have individual written evacuation plans.

There are excellent working relationships between the care and teaching staff. Care

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staff support pupils during prep and hold revision sessions in the boarding houses for pupils taking GCSE examinations. There are both informal and formal opportunities to meet, including the multi-disciplinary pastoral care committee. This ensures an effective joint approach when there are concerns for pupils and works well in ensuring good outcomes. Boarders can access an extensive range of social and recreational activities in the school and local community and the activities organiser consults pupils about their preferences. For example, a new skateboard area is being created in response to the demands of some keen skateboarders. Within the school, pupils can access the swimming pool, sports hall, fitness gym, volleyball court, tennis and sports fields. A youth club provides opportunities for informal social interaction and provides a number of young people with work experience. All activities are risk assessed to ensure boarders’ safety.

Boarders receive high individual levels of support from the staff team and from external agencies if needed. Relationships are excellent and boarders are positive regarding the support provided. All boarders have a key worker and regular meetings to discuss their progress, development and relationships with others. Events such as birthdays are celebrated, for example, with pizza and films in the boarding house. There is Skype in all houses to aid boarders’ communication with home, and care staff are in regular contact with parents and carers. There are excellent formal and informal systems in place to consult with boarders, including the student council. Boarders gave examples of their opportunities to make changes, for example to the rules regarding mobile phone use at weekends, and say that the reasons are fully explained if their requests cannot be met. Good accommodation is provided for boarders at the main school site and at the primary school. The boarding houses differ in age and style and there is an ongoing programme of refurbishment and upgrading. Boarders are involved in decisions regarding décor and furnishings.

There is strong and effective leadership of boarding. Care staff spoke extremely positively regarding the support and guidance provided by the joint heads of care who focus on practice and boarders. There is also a care standards officer who leads on compliance, policy and staff training. There is rigorous internal monitoring of practice but less formal evaluation of the impact of boarding on the outcomes for boarders. There are good staffing levels in the boarding houses and boarders say that they can quickly find a member of staff when they need one. There are systems in place to ensure that the whereabouts of boarders is known at all times and ‘walkie-talkies’ have recently been introduced to aid communication between the care staff. There is a strong commitment to provide training to staff in boarding practice including a weekly ‘in house’ session. Recent topics have included religious beliefs, trust and confidentiality, and transitions between the boarding houses.

*This is the grade for the boarding provision*

**The effectiveness of the boarding provision**

**2**

**Views of parents and carers**

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The number of questionnaire responses received from parents and carers by the end of the inspection represent just under a quarter of possible returns. Almost all comments received indicate the high level of satisfaction that parents and carers feel for the school and the support it offers both them and their children. A few parents and carers would like their children to have more opportunities to talk to deaf adults in the evenings and a very small minority raised concerns about behaviour, which were discussed with the school. Also, one anonymous parent raised a concern about safeguarding with the inspectors during the inspection. However, comments such as 'Mary Hare is the perfect environment for our daughter' and 'We are very happy with every aspect of Mary Hare School' reflect the views of the vast majority of parents and carers.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mary Hare School 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 233 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	76	12	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	60	18	36	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	35	70	13	26	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	66	15	30	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	72	12	24	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	31	62	17	34	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	46	26	52	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	60	15	30	3	6	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	40	80	8	16	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	68	13	26	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	68	12	24	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	40	80	8	16	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	43	86	5	10	2	4	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**

1 July 2011



Dear Pupils and Students

### **Inspection of Mary Hare School, Newbury RG14 3BQ**

Thank you very much for welcoming us to the school. We really enjoyed our visit, particularly the chance to meet and talk to so many of you. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found.

We agree with you that yours is an outstanding school. We have judged that it provides you with an outstanding education and a good level of care, both in school and in your houses. You told us about the wide range of interesting things there are for you to become involved in, both in and out of school. We saw that this makes a real difference to your self-confidence as well as to your learning. Your behaviour in lessons is excellent. You do well in external examinations and many of you work very hard indeed to achieve as well as you do. We were very impressed by how much you all contribute to your own and the wider community and we judged this contribution, and many other areas of your personal development, to be outstanding.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy learning in different subjects and we could see that this is so in many of your lessons. All staff work hard to ensure that you do as well as you can and help you to make excellent progress. We think, though, that teachers could provide you with some more information when they mark your work so that you are clear about why you have the grade you do and what you need to do to improve.

The governors of the school have begun to talk more to all the staff about ways in which your school can continue to improve. We have asked them and the principal to make sure that the links between education and boarding support you as well as they can and that all staff have an opportunity to contribute to the school's continuing improvement. We have also asked the governors to find more ways of making sure they know how well the school is doing and that you, your families, and everyone else involved with the school know what they do too. You can help by continuing to give your ideas to your student council representatives.

I wish you well for the future, particularly those of you who are moving on.

Anne Duffy  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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