

Mary Hare School

Arlington Manor, Snelsmore Common, Newbury RG14 3BQ

Inspection dates	29–30 June 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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Good
Quality of care and support in the residential provision	Good
How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision	Good
Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Results are on the up! By the time they reach the end of Year 11, more pupils than in the past are gaining a good set of GCSE results, including in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is strong and improving. Teachers feel supported well through good-quality training opportunities and access to senior staff for advice.
- Mary Hare’s pupils take great pride in their school. Their behaviour is exemplary. Adults, including the therapy staff, attend well to pupils’ learning, emotional and healthcare needs.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from good study programmes, well-tailored to their needs and aspirations. They leave well equipped for the next steps in their training or employment.
- The principal has the full support of the staff and parent body. He and the senior staff lead by example. Expectations of staff and pupils are high.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. Any concerns, worries or issues are dealt with effectively. The residential provision is safe, well led and well maintained.
- Residential staff are highly motivated and committed to providing the best possible care. Children and young people enjoy being in residential provision. They grow in self-esteem, communication and social skills.
- The governing body takes a keen interest in the residential and educational provision. Governors’ independent monitoring is top class.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet consistently outstanding.
- Leaders have not yet ensured fully that best practice is shared and that all the national minimum standards are met.

Compliance with national minimum standards for residential special schools

- The school does not meet all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of teaching on learning so that outcomes across the school improve to the level of outstanding by ensuring that:
 - higher attaining pupils are routinely challenged in lessons and not left unoccupied when they have completed their work ahead of others
 - resources are matched more closely to the range of pupils' needs, including for homework
 - teaching staff across primary and secondary provision gain opportunities to learn from one another, share untapped expertise, knowledge and skills, and develop a greater sense of belonging.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management to the level of outstanding by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels develop an integrated approach to the development of best practice across primary, secondary and residential provision
 - teachers' performance management targets reflect a consistent approach across all subject areas
 - leaders chase the minutes of multi-agency review meetings and challenge the practice of other professionals when necessary
 - health and welfare plans are in place for all young people where applicable
 - leaders in the residential provision provide succinct risk assessments that guide staff clearly in relation to what strategies to apply, and how and when to apply them.
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards (NMSs) for residential special schools:
 - The school makes all reasonable efforts to obtain all necessary information about a child's health, education and care needs, prior attainment and achievements prior to (or in an emergency, at the time of) admission (NMS 2.4).
 - **Best practice recommendation:** provide opportunities for safeguarding leaders to gain level 3 qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision is good

How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision is good

- Since the previous inspection, the principal has restructured the leadership of the school successfully. With a clear focus on raising achievement, he has established a strong team of middle and senior leaders. Middle leaders feel supported well to lead and manage their team members. They recognise and fully embrace their accountability for improving teaching and outcomes in their subject areas.
- The head of primary has been empowered to take a similar approach. She has carefully implemented a new system of rigorous assessment when pupils are admitted to the school. This has enabled the identification of pupils' additional needs and appropriate strategies to address these effectively.
- Close monitoring of learning across the school and tracking of pupils in relation to their targets are beginning to yield improvements. Teachers, too, can now expect carefully tailored training to help them hone their practice, which they appreciate greatly.
- Leaders have raised the bar in relation to their expectations of what pupils can achieve and how pupils behave. These high expectations are visible throughout the school and in the residential provision, for example through displays and the ways in which pupils and members of staff relate to each other. As a result, pupils attend regularly and their achievement is improving.
- Leaders monitor learning and teaching more closely than in the past, paying particular attention to emerging trends as and when they arise. Where pupils lag behind, effective intervention strategies ensure that they are helped to catch up with their peers, for example, in reading through the use of an accelerated reader scheme.
- Appraisal targets for teachers and performance management processes were not high on the agenda at the time of the previous inspection. This is no longer the case. All members of staff are now set targets against which their performance is measured. However, the principal and governors acknowledge that there is still room for improvement in the quality and consistency of targets set for teachers.
- The curriculum is designed well. Leaders and governors are mindful of the need to prepare pupils fully for the next steps in their education or training and adult life in modern Britain. A very wide range of GCSE subjects that appeal to the aptitudes and specific needs of Mary Hare's pupils provides pupils with stimulating choices, which they value greatly and in which they achieve well.
- For pupils who proceed into the sixth form, appropriate study programmes offer either vocational or academic routes, including opportunities to pursue apprenticeships, if students wish.
- Parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, express a strong level of satisfaction with the way in which the school is run. Several parents contacted inspectors directly to tell us how happy their child has been since joining the school.
- Equality of opportunity is an important principle. As a result, both in primary and secondary, there is a strong moral code and inclusive culture. Leaders place great emphasis on ensuring pupils' well-being during their time in the school. For some pupils whose prior experience of mainstream schooling has not been positive, Mary Hare School is the first school in which they feel safe and develop a sense of pride and belonging.
- Recognising the importance of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, leaders have sought to ensure that through the taught curriculum, the pursuit of hobbies, after-school activities, trips out and other enrichment opportunities, no pupil is sold short. To this end, the opportunities that abound serve pupils exceptionally well and are fully reflected in pupils' excellent attitudes and conduct.
- Effective and efficient leaders with the right skill set and experience manage the residential provision well. Senior leaders recognise that there is still work to do to integrate and exploit fully the skills, knowledge and expertise that reside within the education and residential provision, particularly with regard to the primary school, which is on a separate site.

- Additional funding through the physical education and sports premium has supported the introduction of individual coaching sessions, so that pupils can experience golf, basketball, swimming and climbing sessions. Leaders believe that these opportunities are helping build pupils' skills and self-esteem.
- Monitoring is top class. Senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body's independent visitors' reports set alongside an external consultant's reports enable governors to raise relevant issues, thereby providing a good level of professional challenge.
- Leaders give careful, documented thought to the sharing of rooms in the boarding houses. Individual risk assessments concerning sleeping accommodation are completed, where necessary. Other risk assessments are put into place as issues emerge. However, risk assessments are not always in place for every child or young person after an incident.
- Leaders' approach to e-safety is thorough. Leaders respond to any concerns, consulting with other professionals to agree the strategies to keep pupils as safe as possible. Senior leaders recognise the need to develop school policies further in the rapidly changing landscape of social media. Work is underway to address this in conjunction with the pupils.
- Leaders have developed a comprehensive procedure for the admission of new pupils. However, the process does not ensure fully that information from placing authorities concerning pre-existing health and welfare plans are made available prior to a pupil's admission.
- At the time of this inspection, leaders did not have a system in place to chase key minutes, such as 'child in need' reviews and 'team around the child' meetings with other professionals. Agreed decisions and actions were not available in writing. Although these were obtained during the inspection, a system had not been put into place beforehand.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors provide strong leadership and direction. They know the school well and bring a valuable set of skills, knowledge and expertise to their roles. Since the previous inspection they have re-focused their roles and made clear what they expect of leaders within the school and what leaders can expect of them. They have insisted on tight monitoring procedures in relation to matters concerning safeguarding and child protection and equally tight systems to manage the performance of staff. They rightly state that they are on a journey to improvement and recognise that having introduced performance management and reduced staffing costs, they now need to ensure that targets relating to teachers' performance reflect a fair, effective and consistent approach across subject areas. They have dealt successfully with budgetary difficulties and keep a close eye on the expenditure of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and physical education and sports funding. They ensure that pupil premium funding is spent wisely and for the benefit of those pupils for whom it is intended.
 - The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Since the previous inspection, policies, procedures and record-keeping have been revised. School and residential staff have a good knowledge of child protection procedures. They are supported well by designated safeguarding leaders who are responsible for pursuing concerns. Safeguarding leaders are diligent in their approach. They maintain an excellent audit trail of concerns and how these have been followed up. However, although they have nationally recognised level 2 qualifications, they would benefit from training to level 3.
 - Suspicions of harm are dealt with effectively. School leaders are prompt in their pursuit of any concerns, including incidents that happen in the home environment and referring these concerns to the appropriate authority. Governors monitor safeguarding processes closely, providing challenge when an incident has not been referred to explore the reasons why.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Teaching is characterised by teachers' confident and passionate subject knowledge and enthusiasm for what they do. In response, pupils throughout the school exhibit a strong desire to contribute both in question and answer sessions with the class teacher and when working with other pupils in groups.
- Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' reading, writing and communication skills across all subjects. They keep a strong focus on making explanations to pupils clear. Visual and written cues are routinely used to promote sound understanding and rapid progress in pupils' learning.
- Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils are underpinned by an outstanding culture of mutual respect and care. These carefully fostered relationships are very instrumental in building pupils' resilience and confidence as learners.
- Teaching assistants add significant value, working very effectively, and facilitating pupils' learning without falling into the trap of providing pupils with the answers. The strong working partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is a growing strength of the school and is helping pupils to progress

rapidly in their learning.

- Speech and language therapists play an important role in identifying barriers to pupils' learning, particularly in the primary school, and in helping pupils and teaching staff to overcome them.
- Throughout the school, levels of challenge for pupils are generally high. For example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson, pupils were encouraged very effectively to develop their own ideas, evaluate them and suggest improvements.
- Although teaching is promoting good and often rapid progress for most pupils across the school, this is not universally the case. Sometimes resources are not matched well to pupils' needs and on occasions the most able pupils are not always given a further challenge when they have shown that they can understand and complete a task.
- Homework is an established routine and part of the culture of the school for primary and secondary pupils. Teachers provide regular marking and feedback, in line with the school's policy. However, not all of the feedback is moving pupils forward in their learning or helping to raise the standard of their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils present as confident and self-aware. They enjoy their school and are proud to belong here.
- Pupils with whom inspectors spoke were enthusiastic in their praise of the school. One pupil, when asked to sum up what was best about the school, replied, 'everything'. Leaders have established good systems to provide help or support for pupils when needed, including working with external agencies where necessary.
- Pupils understand about the dangers of online social networks, and e-safety is a high priority within the school. Assemblies and lessons provide a strong steer for pupils about issues concerning bullying or unacceptable behaviours.
- In the primary school, pupils demonstrate a strong awareness of the 'good to green' code of conduct. Incidents of bullying are very rare. Leaders have appointed a mental health and well-being coordinator who supports pupils with low self-esteem or those who struggle when they join the school mid-year. Pupils told inspectors that they know whom to turn to if they need help.
- Rates of attendance are above average for special schools nationally and pupils are punctual and ready to learn. Most absences are owing to check-ups related to deafness.
- Leaders have ensured that advice and guidance for pupils' next steps in their education are provided independently. However, although most pupils who completed the online survey found this helpful, a significant minority felt that there was either too much information or that it was not entirely helpful.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school provides a calm and purposeful environment which pupils enjoy greatly.
- Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well throughout the day, including at breaks and lunchtimes. They are polite, respectful and welcoming to visitors. In lessons, their attitudes to learning are exemplary.
- Across the entire school, pupils present as ready and eager to learn. Their enthusiasm is infectious. Lessons are characterised by pupils' helpful approach to working responsibly, supporting one another.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Leaders recognise that the delay in pupils' language maturation means that their test and exam results, when compared with national data, particularly in primary, point to slow rates of progress and low standards.
- Over time, pupils' progress from their starting points and results in national tests and examinations, in primary and secondary, have not compared favourably when compared with national figures. However, through their own rigorous assessments of pupils' standards when they join the school and close monitoring of how well pupils are progressing from their starting points, leaders are able to point to evidence of good and outstanding progress by the time that pupils reach the end of key stage 4.
- Moreover, as a result of leaders' closer monitoring and interventions, in 2015, standards achieved at the end of Year 11 improved significantly and rose slightly above the level of the national minimum standards

set by the government, for the first time.

- There are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups, although in 2015, pupils of middle and higher ability did not achieve as well as pupils with lower starting points. This is reflected in the occasional lack of challenge in teaching for some of these pupils. Leaders track all pupils' progress closely and adjust their improvement plans accordingly if there is clear evidence of a trend of underachievement.
- The school receives additional support for a very small number of disadvantaged pupils, through pupil premium funding. Leaders are able to demonstrate well how bespoke support and close monitoring ensure that disadvantaged pupils generally make similar progress to their peers.
- In the primary school, leaders are able to demonstrate the very substantial gains that are being made in pupils' reading ages through the use of an accelerated reader scheme, with routine testing and re-testing.
- Some pupils enter the primary school with a range of additional needs to those of their deafness. However, rigorous assessment of their needs when they arrive, coupled with effective extra help, for example through the speech and language therapy team, are helping these pupils to enjoy and achieve well.
- Furthermore, in primary there is equally good evidence of excellent gains being made in writing for pupils currently on roll. However, the head of primary acknowledges that there is still room for improvement in the development of primary pupils' numeracy skills, supported by the sharing of best practice in the teaching of mathematics across the entire school.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Students in the sixth form benefit from a rich choice of study programmes well tailored to their needs and aspirations. Independent advice and guidance are available to help inform students' choices, resulting in retention rates and progression data that outstrip the national figures.
- Relevant work-experience placements are arranged for many sixth-form students through the local education and business partnership, with shorter and extended block placements for those on vocational study programmes. Students expressed how much they value the opportunity to enter the world of industry or business and to develop their skills and knowledge as a result.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are good and improving. Students make very good progress from their starting points, which in general are lower than those found in mainstream sixth forms.
- For students who pursued two or more substantial vocational qualifications in 2015, results exceeded the national figures. However, the achievement of students following academic A-level courses compared less favourably, with results that were below the national average. Nevertheless, as with GCSE results at the end of Year 11, the gap between the school's results and national figures is narrowing.
- Numbers in the sixth form are small and study programmes are bespoke to the individual students concerned. For these reasons, most students do not follow traditional study programmes with three subjects or more. However, students' rates of progress from their starting points are impressive. Equally, there is a strong and improving pass rate for GCSE re-takes in English and mathematics.
- The overwhelming majority of students achieve the qualifications necessary to enable them to go on to their chosen destinations in higher education, further education, apprenticeships or employment.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is impeccable. Students act as excellent role models for younger pupils and play a full part in the life of the school, modelling correct behaviours for younger pupils. Their attendance is excellent.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and set challenging and imaginative tasks. Students' progress is tracked carefully and there are good systems for additional help where students fall behind.
- The head of sixth form provides strong and effective leadership. Her vision for the sixth form is ambitious, where only the best will do. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are effective and have resulted in improvements in outcomes.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision is good

- Children and young people in the residential provision benefit from a positive experience at Mary Hare School. They make friends and enjoy a range of activities. One young person said, 'This is the best school ever'.
- Children and young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with all the staff in the residential provision. They respond extremely well to living in a safe and supportive environment. Behaviour is exemplary.
- Staff in the residential provision listen to and recognise the needs of individuals and respond well to emerging issues. Offering the best possible care and support is at the forefront of the way in which they approach their work.
- Children and young people live in a safe environment. Their social and emotional needs are met. Where concerns arise, they feel confident to share these concerns in the belief that staff will respond to any worries they have.
- Staff in the residential provision pay attention very effectively to the children and young people's educational and social development, for example through the provision of opportunities for children to develop independent skills and take on responsibilities as they mature.
- Young people with whom inspectors met spoke highly of their paid roles in the school's youth café where they can apply for jobs and interview candidates. As a result, their confidence and self-esteem blossom.
- The therapy team, in conjunction with other staff, plays a key role in ensuring that the emotional needs of children and young people are met well. For example, help provided for those suffering from anxiety or low self-esteem has enabled some young people to perform in a talent contest in front of their peers.
- The health needs of children and young people are met well. Staff engage with other professionals where necessary. Clear protocols exist to support the specific health needs of young people who have allergies, gastrostomy feeds or epilepsy. Staff are aware of the protocols and know what to do in an emergency.
- Medication procedures are robust. Where errors occur in the administration of medication, procedures are reviewed and lessons are learned. Good risk assessments are in place for children or young people who self-medicate.
- Parents and professionals alike speak highly about the school and the progress children and young people in the residential provision are making. They note particularly that those young people who had negative experiences elsewhere in the past are now much happier and make comments such as, 'I cannot wait to stay'.

Quality of care and support in the residential provision is good

- Children and young people in the residential provision are highly valued. Their differences are celebrated and the prevailing culture is highly supportive of the individual. Consequently, they thoroughly enjoy their time in the school and some elect to stay mid-week, when they have a choice to go home.
- Within each boarding house, on the school site and further afield, children and young people enjoy a full range of meaningful and stimulating activities. They say that they can never get bored. They take on paid roles in the youth club, boosting their self-esteem and confidence. Equally, there are overseas trips available, such as to a linked school in Africa.
- Staff know the children and young people in the residential provision extremely well and meet their needs effectively. Individual health and welfare plans are of a very good standard. However, not all of the children and young people whose specific needs have been identified by staff have a plan.
- Staff have a system for reporting minor maintenance issues. The system has been improved since the last inspection and is now effective. There is a rolling refurbishment programme and strategic plans identify how capital expenditure will improve the environment. This approach ensures that the residential environment is comfortable and maintained well.
- Catering is of a good standard. The menu is healthy and varied with a wide range of choices. Children and young people are also encouraged correctly to try new foods and flavours.
- Leaders have ensured that children and young people in the residential provision have a voice. They have little to complain about. Young people are able to communicate their views, wishes and feelings in a

variety of ways. For example, they can use the suggestion board or school council to air their views.

- Young people speak highly of the termly one-to-one sessions and the availability of staff to talk to them at any time. The independent listener is readily available and is a popular visitor to the school.
- Staff are motivated and committed. Morale is high and members of staff feel supported in their supervision and training. There are good initiatives to develop staff who wish to take on leadership roles. The therapy team is a strength of the school; therapists play a key role in supporting children and young people in identifying and overcoming the barriers to a successful residential experience.

School details

Unique reference number	110180
Social care unique reference number	SC011137
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10009426

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

The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of students in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	62
Number of boarders on roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Granatt
Principal	Peter Gale
Telephone number	01635 244200
Website	www.maryhare.org.uk
Email address	p.gale@maryhare.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 October 2014

Information about this school

- Mary Hare School is larger than the average non-maintained residential special school for pupils who have moderate, severe or profound deafness.
- All pupils have cochlear implants and/or hearing aids. They are all taught to use spoken English.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan for their deafness, apart from a very few pupils who come from overseas. A large number of pupils have special educational needs in addition to their deafness.
- The school is based on two sites. The primary school caters for up to 35 pupils aged from five to 11. The secondary school caters for up to 200 pupils aged 11 to 19, including 62 currently in the sixth form. There are no children in the early years foundation stage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is smaller than that found in similar schools. There is one child looked after by the local authority attending the school currently.
- Most pupils are of White British background.
- The school has residential provision in six houses on the primary and secondary sites. Nearly all pupils are residential.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 19 lessons across primary and secondary sites, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the head of primary, senior leaders and staff.
- Inspectors met with governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Social care inspectors visited all the boarding houses, looked at documentation and had discussions with boarding house leaders, staff and pupils. Pupils completed a survey on the first day of the inspection.
- The inspection team scrutinised a number of documents, including those related to safeguarding and child protection. The inspectors also considered records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and other documentation concerning leaders' self-evaluation and monitoring.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' work across subjects. They also held meetings with pupils across the age range. They spoke to pupils informally in lessons, at breaks, lunchtimes and in the evenings.
- Inspectors took account of the 137 responses to the online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

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