



Teaching & Learning Policy

June 2021

Aims

The primary aim of the Royal Free Hospital Children's School is to provide all pupils with an enjoyable, enriching and purposeful learning experience whilst attending any of the five divisions within the school's provision, namely:

- The Acute Paediatric ward on 6 North
- The Eating Disorders Intensive Service (EDIS) located at Queen Mary House
- The Day School at The Hive in Swiss Cottage – a GCSE programme aimed at Year 10/11
- The Thomas Group aimed at Year 7-10
- The Outreach Service working with individual young people within the local authority

Responding to need and circumstance

At the RFHCS, we believe learning is dependent on a variety of pedagogical approaches. The effectiveness of the given approach often depends on the particular subject matter being taught, an understanding of the diverse needs of various learners, and an ability to adapt to specific conditions and surrounding circumstances. A good teacher believes in the capacity of all students to learn, and carefully utilizes a range of methods to ensure learning opportunities are maximised. We encourage a variety of pedagogical approaches which we believe enhance the learning of our young people. Subsequently, the Day School, and to a certain extent the Thomas Group and Outreach, follow carefully prepared curricula, whilst on the ward and within EDIS the principles of "What Matters to You?" are adhered to; meeting the immediate and specific needs required for each session.

Partly expedited by the current pandemic, the school has introduced and fully embraced the use of the Google Classroom and Workspace, which facilitates our ability to teach and work remotely, when previously we could not. Documents such as lesson plans, lessons, student assignments, examinations, timetables and calendars can be easily shared, received and stored, and the platform provides a video conferencing feature which does not require knowledge of email addresses. Consequently, one of the positive effects of using the platform has been to promote further cohesion of the services that collectively form the RFHSC. All lessons can be accessed from the stream so a student unable to attend for whatever reason is not left behind. Live streaming has proved to be an additional process, almost rendering the Isolation Robots obsolete.

Ward

Teachers are guided by advice from the medical team and/or CAMHS, the wishes of the parent/carer, the wishes of the pupil and by the child's physical, psychological and emotional well-being at any given time. All young people are requested to complete an All About Me form which provides important background information that enables staff to personalise learning for any particular individual. When requested, which is quite common, the school will contact the home school of all young people to establish contact and what is being covered at school. The introduction of remote learning platforms such as Teams and the Google Classroom has made great strides bridging the gap between school and hospital, often providing a sense of relief that the young person is not falling behind with school work. Progress measures on the ward are never solely academic as we deem pastoral interventions such as linking up with services and providing general guidance just as important. Pastoral and academic progress for each session is recorded within the SIMs database under the headings: Baseline, Target and Achievement.

EDIS

In order to provide structure to the day, pupils attending the Eating Disorder Intensive Service are normally expected to attend the Day School. This is currently under review due to covid restrictions. The School and Intensive Service work in collaboration to provide an academically challenging and meaningful, high quality educational experience that also provides the opportunity for social interaction, which can be so important for this cohort of young people. Students participate in classroom activities and the learning prescribed by the school, in addition to work provided by home schools forms part of their daily curriculum. This provides access to the expertise of the classroom teacher so progress can be assessed and monitored as within the Day School. In addition to the teaching staff of all home schools, teachers at the RFHCS establish and maintain regular contact and support with associated professionals such Medical Consultants, Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS), Speech and Language Therapists, Dieticians and Social Services. Students are also encouraged to maintain contact with their home schools via their remote platform.

Day School

The Day School is no longer located on 6 North and now resides outside the tower, within a designated building called The Hive in Swiss Cottage. We believe this to be part of the natural growth and evolution of the school, and is an indication of how the needs of this cohort are genuinely being respected. Day School students follow a structured timetable, covering the core subjects of English, Mathematics and General Science. Great efforts are made to accommodate student choice. So far, timetabled teaching outside core subjects has been made available in Latin, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Religious Studies, Computer Science, History and any home language a student wishes to sit.

Through creating a secure, stable and welcoming environment, with an emphasis on self-esteem and autonomy, we aim to provide an effective and stimulating climate for learning similar to what would be expected in mainstream schools. We strive to promote a positive atmosphere and teach students how to develop respect for themselves and others with an emphasis on cooperation, consideration and contribution. Despite having to cover a 2 year GCSE course in what is effectively 2 terms, students respond well to the demands of such a challenge and are often inspired by this approach.

Learning thereby serves as a major therapeutic aid in addition to building academic confidence in preparation for the next stages in their education.

Outreach and Thomas Group

For children with medical needs unable to attend their mainstream schools, the RFHCS, in partnership with the Camden School Inclusion Team, offer both a home tuition service and access to the Thomas Group, a provision based at the Camden Learning Centre, which provides 3 days of structured learning on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Historically, the Thomas group has also served as a feeder provision for the RFHCS day school. Both services provide daily reports via the SIMs database, using the similar principals used to record progress on the ward, of baseline, target assessment.

Progress

Weekly student progress sheets are used to evidence examples of individual work and progress for either an individual piece of work or a unit of work over a period of time. This provides teachers a baseline assessment where progress can be recorded and evidenced, and allows students to reflect on and discuss their own work and ways to improve. This collaborative approach and feedback enables teachers to adjust learning styles, pace of learning and lesson content to the individual needs and requests of each student. In addition to the Learning Record, students are formally assessed for GCSE progress and attainment at 6 points in the year (See Schedule for Assessment, Monitoring & Evaluation of Teaching & Learning). This is essential for pupils returning to mainstream school as well as those who stay at the RFHCS for Year 11 and sit Key Stage 4 exams. We still provide grades as we believe our young people need a clear understanding of what they need to achieve in order to access the next stage in their education.

Achievement

Achievement is formally recognised through the Pupil Rewards System, nomination for subject specific awards at the end of each term and the Jack Petchey Achievement Award scheme. The Jack Petchey award has now been extended throughout the provision so nominees can be selected from Ward, EDIS, Day School, Outreach and Thomas Group students. Measures of achievement such as social, emotional and behaviour changes are equally as valid as academic achievement. The school is also a registered centre for the AQA Unit Award scheme, which accredits tasks directed by teaching staff.

Homework

Homework is given weekly for Core Subjects and, as required, for others. There is also a regular Study Club after school on Wednesdays, supported by medical students from University College London. Homework is expected to be recorded in student planners, and notifications and due date reminders are published within the Google classroom for each subject.

Contact/Pastoral visit

Contact/Pastoral visits replace teaching when:

- (1) A young person is too unwell or distressed for a teaching activity but is willing to be distracted or engaged through a game or story such as chess or backgammon.
- (2) A young person has refused teaching and a conversation with the child and/or parent is necessary
- (3) The teacher needs to obtain educational and/or pastoral information. This may involve talking to the young person or parent.
- (4) Engaging the young person in conversation in order to support their emotional well-being.
- (5) An older student requests to work independently, but requires some equipment or requests the use of a computer.
- (6) The parent of a younger student wishes to engage in an educational activity with the pupil once it has been set up by the teacher.
- (7) A young person in protective isolation feels unwell but is persuaded to play an educational game on the computer. This may require relatively little teaching but a considerable input of teacher time (for example, setting up and cleaning computer equipment).
- (8) The young person is not in education, employment or training (NEET) or missing education (CME). This often results in guidance into enrolling onto an apprenticeship or an alternative college place.

Examinations

The school is an accredited examination centre with the 5 main examination boards (OCR, Edexcel, AQA, CAIE and the WJEC) in addition to the American University entrance SATs Collage Board which allows young people to take examinations at times throughout the year, rather than just the summer, when young people could be too unwell to take exams at this time of year only. We also have the capacity to administer all Ks2, Ks4 and Ks5 public examinations.

The school recently made an application to act as the main entering centre for private candidates within the local authority. As a hospital school that would quite often encounter young people missing education or not in employment or training, this seemed to make perfect sense. This was previously conducted on an ad hoc basis, but the role is now officially recognised and a service level agreement has been drafted between the RFHCS and Camden local authority.

Date Updated: June 2021

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