

Royal School for the Blind

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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Date of last inspection	18 September 2006

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The Royal School for the Blind provides places for up to 66 pupils, male or female, from ages two to 19 years. All students have a visual impairment and learning difficulties ranging from moderate to profound. The school accepts students from across the country and are residential from Monday to Friday. All parts of the school are accessible to all pupils and much thought has been given to the lighting and décor to enhance the environment for visually impaired pupils. Facilities within the school include a swimming pool, a soft play area, a multi sensory room, an outdoor adventure playground and an outdoor mobility circuit. The school has access to its own transport. Teaching programmes are developed using either non-visual or low-vision methods, which encourage the pupils to develop their tactile skills and any residual vision. As well as print enhanced by visual aids, a few pupils will use Braille as a reading medium and others will use the 'Moon' system. The classes are small with a high staff to pupil ratio. The school has a multi-disciplinary approach, which includes the involvement of specialist staff, such as physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and mobility therapists. Accommodation is provided within four units; Heron, Sandpiper, Kingfisher and Bradbury.

Summary

The inspection of Royal School for the Blind residential provision was carried out on an unannounced basis. The main focus of this visit was to understand how the home was meeting the needs of the young people and how well staff were supported by the organisation to make sure they had the skills, training and support to meet the needs of the young people. All of the standards from the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards and associated Regulations were assessed under all outcome areas. All outcomes were judged as good. This means that children are supported by skilled, experience staff within a caring environment that meets their assessed needs. Some recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection and these relate to documentation within the areas of medication, health and safety, communication, staff training and young people moving on.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was asked to improve the following within the residential provision. Medication has improved though within one unit minor discrepancies were found. Documentation in relation to unit meetings, one to one sessions and communication books has improved, however, the work undertaken with the young people within the residence is not yet fully reflected within the documentation. The arrangements for activities for young people have been reviewed to ensure that young people have further access to indoor and outdoor activities. With regards to health and safety, fire alarms are now tested weekly and have been maintained and the light fittings in the respite unit have been cleaned. Monitoring systems both internal and external have been reviewed and these now meet the National Minimum Standard expected within this area. As a result of the above young people are further safeguarded within the residential provision.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Healthcare plans observed, show details of doctor, dentist, and other specialised services as and when appropriate, and appointments are logged on young people's files. Discussion with staff, as well as feedback from the placing authorities held within the residential units', documentation shows that the staff at the school are well informed of the health needs of the children placed. Medication is securely stored in each of the residential units. There is a first aid kit in place and medication held was checked and was found to be appropriately documented, with the exception of one of the units. The school's arrangements for medication, on the whole, help to safeguard young people's welfare. Menus are in place and were observed during this visit. Young people present communicated their preferences in the menus. These have been taken into account in the planning of the menus. Staff talk about how young people are beginning to develop semi-independence skills within this area. Menus demonstrate that young people are being offered a balanced and varied diet. All staff involved in cooking hold an appropriate food hygiene certificate. This helps young people to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff show respect for young people's privacy and for maintaining suitable levels of confidentiality. Staff manage sensitive issues with tact and professionalism. Young people are able to spend time alone in their rooms if they wish and this is respected by staff. There is a complaints policy and procedure in place within the school. No complaints have been received by Ofsted or the school since the last inspection. There are safeguards in place to support young people if they were unhappy. The safeguarding policy has been reviewed and updated since the last inspection. There is a clear procedure for responding to child protection concerns and the school has access to the local safeguarding team. Staff have received training in child protection and staff members spoken to are clear about their responsibilities for keeping young people safe. Young people have access to people independent from the school, for example, various professionals and visiting governors. There are currently no concerns about bullying. Staff spoken to said that bullying, as an issue, is something that they are always aware of. Each young person has an individual behaviour management plan, and any concerns are highlighted within this. Bullying and behavioural outbursts are also discussed in staff meetings when issues arise. Documentation in relation to young people going absent from the school without permission and notifications of significant events which may occur, are recorded within the school as and when appropriate. Given the needs of the young people, the former would also instigate the child protection procedures. Where notifications have been made previously, the relevant authorities have been notified and the necessary action has been taken by the school. As part of the school's behaviour management of young people, there are records of sanctions and physical intervention. No sanctions have been noted. The emphasis is on rewarding positive behaviour. The physical intervention of young people is used as a last resort; this is to prevent the young person from hurting themselves or others. Staff are appropriately trained in this area. Environmental and young person's risk assessments are in place and were observed. Each young person has a risk assessment that is specific to them and their needs. These have been updated as appropriate. Maintenance certificates including fire records were checked and are appropriate, with the exception of the testing of portable electrical appliances and some good practice recommendations made by the CORGI registered gas engineer. The recruitment and selection process is in place; a random sample of staff files were observed along with verification that all staff have a valid and satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. This means that the vetting of visitors and people wishing to work within the residential units is thorough.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There are good examples of young people receiving support across a range of needs including healthy lifestyles, likes and dislikes, and building self-esteem with young people. Staff spend time individually with young people, communicating with them and offering guidance. Young people's care plans identify how to support individual children. The residential units place importance and emphasis on education. The residential staff have met with each social worker and parents of each young person with regards to their personal education plan. The units have introduced an end of term meeting which involves the residential key worker and the class teacher of each pupil in residence. These meetings discuss the progress of that child, and how each can support the other provision. This promotes continuity between the educational and residential provision. This in turn ensures positive outcomes for young people and their families. Young people have increased opportunities to undertake a range of activities suitable to their ability and interests. Activities include, board games, television, and playing in the soft play room. Staff are also good at identifying and encouraging young people to take part in activities in the local community. Activities are planned to meet young people's needs for enjoyment and to develop social and life skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Documentation and staff discussion demonstrate that all appropriate looked after children documentation is in place. The school has a daily log of information and each young person has a communication book, that staff write in daily. However, there is a lack of detail within the school to home communication books and diary sheets in relation to education, activities, behaviour and positive observations. Staff and other records seen, demonstrate that all the young people's care reviews are up to date. Staff and young people are clear about contact with family and friends. Staff inform that all contact is noted so that everyone is clear what the arrangements are. This ensures that visits go as smoothly as possible. Many young people who are resident during the term time week have been here for several years and the units provide a consistent and stable approach to their care. Young people communicated that they like staying at the school. Young people are consulted in a variety of ways, such as one to one sessions, along with young people's meetings, though the frequency of the latter is intermittent. It was observed that residential units are good at encouraging young people to take part in communicating about things that affect their lives. Relationships between staff and young people were observed as being caring and supportive. Staff are helpful and enjoy spending time with young people. They have clear professional and personal boundaries with young people which are consistent with good childcare practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Developing skills for adulthood and promoting independence is beginning to become an integrated part of the care provided by the residential units. Though, this largely remains undocumented. Young people are encouraged to develop both their social skills and personal care skills. There are systems in place to ensure that each young person has regular pocket money and can secure personal requisites. Records state where monies are spent. The residential units have been well maintained. The overall standard of accommodation is good, providing a

clean and comfortable place to stay. Young people have privacy and support when using the bathroom and there are sufficient bathroom facilities to meet their needs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school has a written Statement of Purpose that reflects the running of the school and is consistent with their policies and procedures. This is also available in alternative formats. The head of care provides effective leadership over the residential units and has a commitment to good childcare practice. Staff are experienced, and enthusiastic, and those spoken to said they enjoyed working at this residential special school. There are sufficient staff to meet the needs of the young people and the staff team provide good role models for the young people. Staff inform that they are supported on a daily basis and through formal one to one supervision. Staff meetings take place regularly and are recorded. They discuss good childcare practice and the individual needs of children placed. There is a commitment to making sure staff have suitable skills and knowledge through a rolling training programme. The inspector was informed that currently 76% of staff have now achieved the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or the equivalent. The National Minimum Standard expected in this area is 80%. There are management systems in place for monitoring the running of the residential units and the quality of the care provided. Written records are in place which document young people's experiences and provide analysis and observation of young people's progress. These also include young people's views. This helps to understand young people's needs and the ways in which they should be supported. Observations, discussions and document reading during this visit identified that the residential units are well managed and care practices used are child centred.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the amount of medication received into and out of residence is recorded in order for an effective audit trail to be maintained (NMS 14.20)
- make sure the portable appliance testing is updated as required (NMS 26.2)
- make sure that the recommendations in the gas certificate are followed up and maintained on file (NMS 26.2)
- ensure that documentation in relation to unit meetings, diary sheets and communication books is expanded to reflect the level of work undertaken (NMS 2.2, 2.4, 2.5)

- ensure that documentation with regards to evidencing the work undertaken by the residential units in preparing young people for leaving their care is in place (NMS 21.1)
- make sure that a minimum of 80% of the care staff have completed an NVQ level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or the equivalent (NMS 31.4).

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.