



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Royal School for the Blind

**Church Road North
Wavertree
Liverpool
Merseyside
L15 6TQ**

Lead Inspector
Julia Toller

Announced Inspection
18th January 2006 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life.

Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school	Royal School for the Blind
Address	Church Road North Wavertree Liverpool Merseyside L15 6TQ
Telephone number	0151 733 1012
Fax number	0151 733 1703
Email address	rsblind@globalnet.co.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	The Royal School for the Blind
Name of Head	Mr J P Byrne
Name of Head of Care	Ms Lesley Poole
Age range of residential pupils	2-19
Date of last welfare inspection	15/11/04

Brief Description of the School:

The Royal School for the Blind provides places for up to 66 pupils male or female from ages 2 –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, i.e. Physiotherapists, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Mobility Therapists.

Accommodation is provided within four units, Heron, Sandpiper, Kingfisher and Bradbury.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection was announced and took place over a period of two days: two inspectors were present. One of these days included a late evening where inspectors experienced the activities on offer to young people at this time. As part of the inspection, questionnaires were sent out to families and carers, placing authorities, young people and staff. During the inspection, a sample of records were inspected, the inspectors met with young people informally and also met with the residential staff group as a team. A full tour of the school facilities, and residential premises took place, and the inspectors shared two meals with the young people and staff.

What the school does well:

The residential facilities excel in the area of informal good communication and promotion of continuity of care. The care offered is multi disciplinary in its approach to each child and their families.

The school excels in their knowledge of children's individual needs and the steps taken to fulfil these needs.

This school is particularly keen to embrace new legislation and guidance and has always worked positively and proactively with the CSCI. For this they should be commended.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Recording at the school has improved since the last inspection, with children's individual files clearly defining the needs of children. This reporting has been compiled from each child's perspective and reflects their individuality, for this the staff should be commended.

Some refurbishment has been carried out on the residential units, which has improved the living environment for children.

The facilities at the school have also been developed since the last inspection; these are also available to children of an evening, which has also improved the quality of life for children during their residential stay. Facilities available include the sensory room which incorporates a water bed, projector and light facilities, a refurbished gym, soft play room, and hydrotherapy pool.

What they could do better:

Although the residential staff have developed effective reporting systems to promote the individual needs of the young people, the inspection highlighted areas of difficulty where continuity may not be promoted. The school is recommended to initiate systems to improve communication between residential and school staff to ensure effective working between these two groups of staff. In turn this will ensure greater consistency for the children whom they care for.

The inspectors also discussed the development of internal monitoring systems to aid the high standards that this school seeks, for example, the head of care could develop regular reports on the achievements of the residential aspect of school life, and include future targets and goals.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14,15

The school promotes the health of young people by meeting their individual care needs, and by providing a varied nutritious diet that meets individual needs; on the whole, young people's health care needs are being met. Appropriate medication facilities are in place.

EVIDENCE:

The school has implemented individual health plans for each child, in line with NMS 14 that include the necessary information. However, this is an area that could be improved upon, by ensuring that all parts of the plan are completed in full

Children's health care plans hold details of parental consent for medical and emergency treatment. As the majority of children have travelled some distance to attend school, their health records are collected from the school nurse's office to take to the hospital. Medical advice is sought when necessary for specific health conditions affecting individual children. On inspection, all cupboards including the medicine fridge were locked, and a system in place to ensure that access to these keys restricted to staff authorised to administer medication. The health needs of some children which can be complex were seen to be managed as part of the daily school routine; at times, and where appropriate, their care needs were met within the classroom to avoid disruption to school life.

Care staffs are understood to have completed a first aid training course.

Meals were observed to be well-managed, orderly and social occasions. Catering arrangements have been reviewed since the last inspection, with the majority of staff and children saying that the quality of food has improved. Residential pupils have their breakfast and evening meal on their respective units where there are facilities for preparing and serving of meals and snacks.

Dining rooms and their furnishings were suitable for the needs and numbers of the children. Where children required assistance, this was observed by the inspectors as being appropriate and promoted dignity and choice. Meals are served in accordance with religious and special dietary needs.

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 by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(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, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

3,4,5,6,7,8,10,26,27

Young people's confidentiality and right to make complaints on behalf of the young people is respected and encouraged. The young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour.

EVIDENCE:

The school provides guidelines to staff on privacy and confidentiality. There was evidence on personnel files of staff signing a confidentiality agreement. The guidance has been expanded to cover NMS 3.2, including access to case records.

Children's case records are kept safely and securely, and the contents remain confidential. Staffs are aware how to deal with and share information which they are given in confidence when necessary for child protection. Information with regard to Childline was available in Braille on each unit.

The process of risk assessment has improved since the last inspection, these documents were found to contain detailed information alongside children's assessed needs.

The School provides space for parents to meet with their children in private.

The School does not undertake room searches. If this were to change then a policy would require to be introduced.

There was evidence that pupils were able to complain if they were unhappy. This tends to happen informally and staff appear responsive to issues that are raised. Some consideration should now be given to clarifying what will be recorded as an informal complaint.

The school's complaints policy and procedure has been further revised since the last inspection. It is recommended that all staff receive training in area that should reflect the matters referred to in NMS 4.4.

There were no recorded complaints since the time of the last inspection.

There is a copy of the local Area Child Protection Committee procedures available in the school and on each unit. The school has a child protection policy that is consistent with LEA guidance and the ACPC procedures. The school's procedures for responding to allegations and suspicions of abuse to a child include all the requirements in Appendix 1 of the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards.

Staff reported that they have received child protection training since the last inspection. Mr Byrne, head of the school, is also the child protection co-ordinator. There has been one minor issue since the last inspection, that has been discussed with the child's social worker and as a result, Mr Byrne now attends all relevant reviews for the child, which has assisted improvements. An "observation" book has been introduced for staff to record any changes in children's behaviours that give cause for concern.

The school has an anti-bullying policy. Young people's questionnaires and observations and discussions during the inspection, reflected that there was no evidence to suggest that bullying was an issue in the school.

Staffs were observed to manage inappropriate behaviours between children sensitively, clearly outlining that aggressive behaviour to others was unacceptable.

In discussions, with the head of care and other staff, it was clear that they have a good understanding of the children's challenging behaviours and have given a great deal of thought to how to manage these effectively. However, it is recommended that these strategies be formalised as part of a care plan, which should be implemented in school and residence, to assist success through a consistent approach to children.

The school has a system in place to notify promptly the CSCI, local social services, placing authorities, and DfES of all significant events relating to the welfare of children in the school in accordance with this standard.

The school has a written procedure identifying action to be taken when a child is absent from school without consent in line with this standard. In addition there was a record to document all incidents when children are missing without authority in accordance with NMS 8.6. However, this is not an issue at the school.

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 both within the school and in the local community.(NMS 13)
- Children receive individual support when they need it.(NMS 22)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

12,13,22

The young people are provided with individualised support, and opportunities for social development according to their needs. Education is actively promoted and the young people are encouraged to engage in varied activities.

EVIDENCE:

It was evident from observations during the inspection that the importance of education is acknowledged and promoted. The staff should be commended for the level of thought that is given to methods of meeting children's health needs in ways that minimise disruption to the children's educational day. However, work can be carried out to improve communication between residential and school staff that will further enhance the quality of life for children.

Meeting the individual needs of children is an area in which the residential staff excel. Time has been taken to write reports from the child's perspective, including "how I feel" and "how I would like you to look after me".

Although children have the option of utilising on site equipment for activities, finances for activities off site, was an issue raised by staff. These finances did appear limiting and this is another area, which could be improved upon. Through discussion with the head and head of care, agreements have been reached to review this issue.

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 living away from home at school.(NMS 20)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2,9,17,20

The home strives to meet young people's needs including facilitating contact with families and other significant people. Arrangements are in place to ensure that the young people have a voice in the general running of the home, and in relation to decisions affecting their lives.

EVIDENCE:

The staff clearly do a great deal of positive work in this area. The inspectors observed many examples of staff seeking pupils' wishes and feelings about decisions affecting their daily lives and these being taken into account. The school provides frequent and suitable means for the pupils to make their views known about their care and provides opportunity for pupils to make everyday choices. Pupils are encouraged to attend their reviews and make their views about their future known. Some units hold unit meetings each week, others not as frequently. The topics of these meetings tend to focus on what activities the pupils wish to do that week. If these meetings were held each week on each unit and the discussion expanded to include other topics then they could be commended as an example of good practice. This would be a means of documenting and formalising the views of the young people, and reflecting the good work of staff.

There was evidence of pupils being able to observe requirements of any specific cultural, religious and linguistic need, however as discussed on inspection this could be further expanded upon.

The school has developed close links with the children's parents and families, and is able to demonstrate that they seek their views about their children's care. Communication between the school and parents has been documented and formalised through the use of school - home books. This is a useful means of sharing information. There is also frequent telephone contact with parents. Parents are informed of any significant event or incident and are included in the planning of their child's care and education. This was evidenced from comments made in a number of parental questionnaires received, for example: "We are very happy with the care", "we cannot speak too highly of the staff, "my son is safe and well cared for".

Staff were observed to work with children who are unable to verbalise their choices, to enable them to make decisions around choices of food and activities.

Relationships between staff and pupils were observed during the period of the inspection to be positive. Staff were able to demonstrate when asked a good understanding of the needs of the pupils.

The philosophy is to reward good behaviour. The school has a behaviour policy, which looks to develop a behavioural management strategy for pupils that is monitored and reviewed. If a pupil is persistently challenging then a personal behaviour plan would be drawn up with the child and their parents. It is recommended in accordance with NMS 9.5 all new staff in direct contact with children receive training in positive care and control of children.

Random samples of files were reviewed on inspection and were found to be well ordered containing an appropriate placement plan where necessary. A second file containing a care plan and other pertinent information was maintained on each unit. It is important to ensure that the current format of

the care plan reflects accurately the cultural and religious needs of each child. Each child has at least one key worker within the School who provides individual guidance and support to the child. The key worker seeks the child's wishes and views with regard to their placement. Children, key workers, Head of Care, parents and Local Authority/LEA if appropriate attend regular reviews and these are documented. It is recommended that key workers develop a report that can be presented at the end of each half term to reflect the progress and achievements that each child has made.

Children's files have been developed to describe the likes and dislikes of children to ensure that this important information is available to all staff. Staff were observed to have developed effective relationships with staff, dealing with any issues of inappropriate behaviour in a calm and sensitive manner.

All admissions are planned with parents and or the placing authority. The Head teacher visits every family prior to admission; moreover the child and their parent are encouraged to spend a day at the school to promote an awareness of the daily running of the school. The school operates a key worker system. Each key worker works closely with the child and their family. (please refer to NMS 2) Children's placements are initially reviewed after three months either by the placing authority or the Local Education Authority. Parents meetings are held annually.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.(NMS 23)
- 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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

16,23,24,25

On the whole the accommodation meets the needs of the young people. The school assists children to transfer to further education in a planned manner.

EVIDENCE:

There are currently four residential units within the school. Sandpiper, Kingfisher and Heron are located within the main school building and Bradbury unit, which is located within the school grounds.

All residential children have a lockable facility within their rooms so that they may keep private and or treasured possessions with them.

The inspectors are pleased to note that each residential pupil has a room of their own; this is considered very good practice. Further that many of these rooms are highly personalised. The children are actively encouraged to pursue personal hobbies and interests. There is designated staff sleep in quarters on each unit. Each staff member has his or her own bedroom.

The grounds of the school are maintained and there is a sensory garden for pupils' enjoyment. The inspectors were informed that on warm summer evening this is sometimes used by the residential units to have a picnic tea.

There are sufficient bathrooms and toilets to meet the needs of the children within the residential units. These can be locked and accessed by staff if necessary. There are separate toilet and bathing facilities for staff.

Children bring their own clothing, toiletries, and are given assistance by staff to purchase further items if and when necessary. These are kept for the exclusive use of the individual child.

The school works actively with each child and their placing authority, parents and LEA in order to prepare young people to leave school. This includes opportunities for children in the school, appropriate to their age and understanding, to develop their knowledge and skills essential for the likely future living arrangements. The inspectors commented to the Head Teacher and Head of Care that the records made available to them during the course of the inspection did not necessarily reflect the good work undertaken with the young people to prepare them for adult life.

Management

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 is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both 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)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

18,19,28,29,30,31,32,33

The home is managed well and a competent staff team supports young people.

EVIDENCE:

Children have a permanent, private and secure record of their history and progress. This would be further enhanced if a copy of a personal education plan (PEP) were available on each child's file within the residential setting. Duty rota's are maintained and were observed on inspection to satisfactorily meet minimum staffing requirements. The School also maintains appropriate information as detailed in NMS 19 in relation to children.

The accident records were reviewed. Staff rotas are maintained and were observed on inspection. There are sufficient staffing arrangements in place to meet the minimum staffing levels during the day and night. A staffing policy as described in NMS 28.2 has been developed and formalised in writing. There

are senior staff on call arrangements in place 24hrs. Residential staff live in the residential units Monday to Thursday whilst the residential children are present. This inevitably aids continuity of care. The inspectors were informed that staffing levels would be increased if the needs of the children increased. Risk assessments are carried out and recorded in writing for night staff identifying any likely risks to children of a night (NMS 28.6). All children currently go home at weekends and holidays. The residential staffs include male and female employees.

New staffs undertake an induction/ probationary period and receive a staff handbook. The induction process that new staff undertake would benefit from being more fully documented to reflect the actual content of the induction. New staff are supervised which includes one to one supervision and mentoring and there are clear lines of accountability and reporting.

All staff now receive annual appraisal this is documented within their personnel files. System's are in place for the introduction of personal development plans.

Issues were raised during the inspection regarding the shift pattern worked by residential staff. During discussions with the head, and head of care, it was agreed that these shift patterns are reviewed to ensure that best use is made of staff time.

It is recommended that systems are developed to ensure that communication between school and residential staff is on going and utilised to develop effective and consistent working relationships between both groups of staff.

Currently the Head Teacher provides a report half-termly to the Board of Governors, and a nominated representative from the Board of Governors visits the school unannounced on a monthly basis. Written reports are provided to the Head of the School within two weeks of the visit without amendment or summary. Reports on all of the above visits are available to the CSCI upon request although these reports would benefit from including confirmation whether they were carried out announced or unannounced as well as stating the actual time and length of the visit.

It is recommended that policies and procedures are developed to describe the purpose of these visits and what is expected of the representative during their visit. It is recommended, that comments made by children and staff should also be included in these reports.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	3
15	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
4	3
5	3
6	3
7	3
8	3
10	3
26	3
27	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3
13	2
22	2

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
9	3
11	X
17	3
20	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
16	3
21	X
23	3
24	3
25	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
18	2
19	3
28	3
29	3
30	3
31	3
32	2
33	3

YES

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action
1	RS13	The finances available for young people to participate in activities should be reviewed to ensure they are reasonable and sufficient for each half term's activities.	30/09/06
2	RS18	Care plans should be developed between school and residential staff to ensure consistency of care for children.	30/09/06
3	RS22	Systems for communication between school and residential staff should be developed.	30/09/06
4	RS32	Staff rotas should be reviewed to ensure they are making "best use" of residential staff time.	30/09/06

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