

Royal School, Manchester

Stanley Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, SK8 6RQ

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- All aspects of the school's work are outstanding. Outstanding teaching for pupils of all ages ensures their outstanding achievement and rapid and sustained progress, particularly in communication and independence skills.
- Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well and plan activities which meet pupils' individual needs exactly, but they do not always make best use of information about pupils' achievements from year to year.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Those with behavioural difficulties show marked improvements in their behaviour after joining the school.
- Leadership and management are outstanding because leaders are very clear about what they expect. They ensure all staff work together as a strong team to secure high expectations of pupils and continuous improvement in the school's teaching.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make exceptional progress, gaining strongly in confidence and independence. This is the result of the exemplary curriculum and outstanding teaching. Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives. Almost all continue in education or are supported to live independently in the community.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons. Most were joint observations with senior leaders.
- The inspector took account of seven responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and also considered the results of the school's survey of parents' views. The inspector also met briefly with a small number of parents.
- Meetings were held with a range of staff including senior leaders, teachers, support staff and therapists. The inspector met with the Chief Executive and Principal of the education trust, and one representative and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, evidence from school self-evaluation and monitoring, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and reports to and minutes of recent meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Liz Godman, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Royal School is a small special school which caters for pupils with complex and profound disabilities and special educational needs, in particular multi-sensory impairment (deaf and blind), autism and related communication difficulties. In addition, pupils have severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and many also have particular medical needs.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. They attend the school from a large number of different local authorities across the country.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school is part of a trust, which also runs a further education college, an adult residential provision and a children's home. Some of the school's pupils live in the children's home.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the approaches to assessing achievement, particularly as pupils move to a new class group, by:
 - making sure that staff work together to check one another's assessments of pupils' attainment and progress
 - providing opportunities for staff to compare their assessments with those of staff in similar schools
 - using the information gained to plan activities to ease pupils' move to a new group or class.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make exceptional progress over time from their starting points on joining the school. The school's data show that almost all pupils make more than expected progress. This is most marked in pupils' communication skills, confidence and independence and is the result of outstanding teaching very precisely matched to the needs of each pupil.
- Each pupil learns to read in a way which makes the best possible use of their skills and senses. This is because the school makes excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT), signing, symbols, photographs, tactile cues and the spoken word both to present information and to encourage pupils' response. As a result, most pupils are able to follow instructions, to undertake activities in the correct order and to predict what will happen next.
- A few pupils show considerable success in learning to write, either by hand or, more usually, by recognising letters and pressing keys on a key board.
- Pupils are also able to use their skills very effectively in a variety of different contexts, whether following a recipe or sorting shapes in mathematics.
- All groups of pupils make outstanding progress. Pupils with autism show a growing preparedness to interact with others and to experience unfamiliar situations. They become increasingly calmer during their time in school and engage quickly in the work provided for them.
- Physically disabled pupils and those who are blind and/or deaf show marked gains in their mobility and independence. For example, pupils moved confidently around a circuit during a physical education session at the start of the day. Older students used their mobility aids effectively under the supervision of the physiotherapist to collect ingredients as part of a food technology lesson.
- Pupils' communication skills are promoted very effectively by the school's use of the pupil premium in purchasing tablets and other ICT resources and by enhancing opportunities for teachers and the speech and language therapist to work together on pupils' programmes.
- Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress, so that they are very well prepared for the future, for example, by being able to work with others to shop for and to prepare a meal. All students also undertake successful work experience, whether in the school or, for a few, with external employers. Parents comment that their children have achieved more than they ever thought possible by the time they reach the sixth form.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- In the lessons observed during the inspection, consistently good and much outstanding teaching was seen. Pupils' outstanding progress, shown in the school's records and evidence from the school's own monitoring and evaluation, confirms the school's outstanding teaching over time.
- Staff have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They also ensure that pupils have time to respond to requests and questions and to show their independence in learning.
- Lessons are planned with very close attention to detail to ensure that every activity takes each pupil to the next step in their learning. All lessons are supported by excellent resources, which secure pupils' interest and help them to understand the activities and what they are going to learn.
- The outstanding teaching in the sixth form provides students with highly relevant and practical activities which are suited to their age group, secure their interest and enhance their skills for the future.
- Teaching assistants provide exceptionally skilled and sensitive individual support to pupils, resulting in pupils' growing confidence and trust. This secures their outstanding progress. The school is acutely aware that this approach might result in isolation and over-dependence. As a result, there are also very good opportunities to work as a group, and individual support staff

are changed as necessary.

- If any pupil has not made expected progress in lessons or over time, staff give careful consideration as to why this might be and adjust activities accordingly. Similarly, if pupils exceed their targets, new more challenging targets are set.
- While very careful checks are made on pupils' progress, the way in which information is passed from class to class occasionally means that assessments are not completely reliable and a small amount of time is lost in matching activities to pupils' needs in the new class. This is because teachers do not always have sufficient opportunities to compare their assessments with those of other teachers in the school or in similar schools.
- There are very strong links between teachers and therapists. This results in exceptionally careful planning to ensure that every activity has a clear purpose and promotes communication, mobility and independence to a high degree.
- While there is no traditional homework, there is daily communication between home and school and pupils' individual education plans are shared. As a result, parents know the school's priorities for their child and can respond to this at home. This contributes to pupils' highly effective learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and are promoted very effectively by the school's high expectations of behaviour and by the way in which it encourages pupils to be as independent as possible.
- Some pupils' behavioural difficulties are linked to autism. The school's evidence shows a marked improvement in behaviour over time for these pupils. When pupils become agitated and distressed, the sensitive approach of staff and the very strong relationships between staff and pupils ensure that situations are calmed very quickly and the return to work is rapid.
- Pupils' behaviour in assembly, around the school and at lunchtimes is excellent. Pupils greet adults politely, often offering a handshake. Pupils' politeness is a reflection of the respect and excellent relationships modelled by adults in the school.
- There is no evidence of bullying and pupils show mutual respect for one another. Staff are extremely vigilant in securing the physical and emotional well-being of all pupils and when pupils do have outbursts of difficult behaviour, this is rarely directed at other people.
- The school council is actively involved in ensuring that pupils' views are sought and acted upon. During the inspection, school council members visited every class to survey the pupils' responses to tasting fruit and were treated with great respect by the other pupils, as a result of the politeness and respect the council members showed.
- Pupils' behaviour and confidence indicate that they feel very safe in school because of the excellent support they receive and the highly positive relationships. Pupils show a growing understanding of safe and unsafe situations. For example, students in the sixth form showed very good attention to hygiene and safety when preparing food and using knives in the cookery room.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The high expectations of leaders and managers are shown in the response of staff at all levels. Senior staff lead by example and this is reflected in the thorough approach and commitment of all staff to meeting the pupils' needs. Staff willingly take on extra responsibilities so that teaching assistants, as well as teachers, lead different aspects of the school's work.
- Rigorous management of performance ensures that priorities for the professional development of staff are identified and met. As a result, staff are well qualified to provide highly specialised support. This ensures the outstanding quality of teaching, which meets the pupils' different and

very complex special educational needs.

- The curriculum provides varied and interesting experiences, as well as activities tailored to meet each pupil's needs. This secures pupils' sustained enthusiasm for learning. The curriculum is also adapted to respond to different special educational needs, so that pupils with autism are not exposed to or distressed by too much stimulus, while those who are deaf and blind are taught using all their senses.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced strongly by the curriculum. Assemblies, in particular, provide pupils with an excellent opportunity to learn about different cultures and faiths in a way which enables them to see images, handle artefacts, hear music and taste different foods, as well as to mix with other pupils and adults.
 - The focus on communication and independence in the curriculum ensures that pupils and sixth form students are very well prepared for the next steps in their lives.
 - Communication with parents is highly effective and includes home visits, home-school diaries and the use of technology. All parents who gave their views, recognise the progress their children are making and almost all support the work of the school overwhelmingly.
 - Similarly, the arrangements for annual and other reviews ensure that local authorities who place pupils in the school are kept informed about pupils' progress and well-being.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Ensures that the governing body has a very accurate view of the school's strengths and is very well informed through reports from school leaders and visits to the school about the quality of teaching.
 - In turn, makes sure the directors and trustees are well-informed about the school's work.
 - Ensures the effective use of resources, including the pupil premium, and the high quality of recruitment of staff.
 - Makes sure that the performance of all staff is managed very well and that information about performance is used to train, deploy and reward staff.
 - Makes sure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	106166
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	403780

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Exell
Headteacher	Jane Woodward
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2009
Telephone number	0161 6100100
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Email address	jane.woodward@seashelltrust.org.uk

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