

Royal School for the Blind

Royal School for the Blind Liverpool, Church Road North, LIVERPOOL, L15 6TQ

Inspection dates 01/07/2013 to 03/07/2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential pupils continue to receive outstanding levels of support and care in a comfortable and stimulating environment that meets their individual needs, resulting in them benefitting from improved personal, social and emotional outcomes.
- Residential pupils enjoy living in a safe environment, where achievements are celebrated, the promotion of equality and diversity is strong and disability is not seen as a barrier to experiencing a full, enriching lifestyle.
- Residential pupils live in an inclusive environment, with high levels of consultation in place to collect their views, thoughts and choices, which are reflected in the life and routines adopted within the school's residential provision.
- Daily routines and working practices promote and guide pupils towards a more independent lifestyle so they can take appropriate risks in trying out new experiences and tasks in a safe and secure environment.
- The organisation and leadership of the school is outstanding, with a particular strength being the integrated work of care, health and educational staff. There is also effective evaluation of all areas of operation and ability to implement changes in the school's quest for continued improvement.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on the morning of day one, by the inspector to announce the inspection. The inspection took place over three days with feedback provided on the afternoon of day three. During the inspection, records and documentation were examined and interviews took place with the residential pupils, head of care, head teacher, staff and feedback was requested from parents. Evening activities were also observed and a tour of the building was also undertaken.

Inspection team

Sonya Robinson

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The Royal School for the Blind is a non-maintained charitable school that provides education and accommodation for children and young people with visual impairment and a wide range of complex special needs, including learning and physical disabilities.

The school provides up to 66 places for children and young people aged from 2 to 19 years, with residential provision for up to 20 children and young people during weekdays in term time. There are currently 32 children on roll. 11 pupils use the residential provision; five male and six female pupils.

There is a variety of boarding arrangements available depending on the needs of the child, ranging from one to four nights each week. The school currently provides residential accommodation in two separate units on the site. The school has a multi-disciplinary approach, which includes the involvement of specialist staff, including nurses, physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and mobility therapists. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- enable children and young people to have access to information regarding Ofsted's Children's Rights Director
- ensure the student council is reinstated to further capture a variety of views from children and young people.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

The outcome of the boarding experience for pupils is outstanding. Residential pupils enjoy exceptionally positive relationships with staff. They regularly engage in laughter with staff and clearly enjoy spending time with them. For example, playing with key boards and soft play equipment. Residential pupils have a strong sense of belonging and have lots of positive things to say about staff. For example, children named various staff who took them clothes shopping before a theatre trip and painted their nails. They are respectful of one another and offer hugs to staff and each other reinforcing the friendships and bonds made.

Residential pupils develop independence skills in accordance with their understanding and ability, which enables them to prepare for adulthood through the excellent opportunities available. This includes life skills, such as personal care and shopping, along with taking part in external social activities to develop social skills and citizenship. Support systems are in place to ensure a smooth transition from the residential provision. For example, providing extended residential care for young people while they await their college placement or supported living accommodation. Feedback from parents and carers within reviews say that their children have benefited a great deal from residing at the school and are much more independent than when they started.

Residential pupils are actively encouraged by staff and are exceptionally well supported to try new activities, such as attending theatre trips and concerts. As a result young people are continually improving in confidence and developing new skills and interests. Young people are proud of their achievements and are very proud of their 'wall of fame', which includes certificates of thanks, from various charities that the young people have raised money for.

The views of residential pupils are actively sought, valued and acted upon. Young people have access to various helplines such as childline and an independent visitor although they had no information about Ofsted's Children's Rights Director. Residential pupils contribute to the running of the care provision by putting forward suggestions for meals, activities and décor in their bedrooms. They feel valued as staff listen to them and act upon their requests, for example, about soft furnishings and posters to display in their bedrooms.

Residential pupils are enthusiastic about keeping themselves fit and healthy. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating. Health care plans are exceptionally well written; are tailored to the specific needs of each young person and actively contribute to them remaining fit and healthy. Furthermore, staff have a thorough knowledge of each residential pupil's individual needs.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. School staff provide residential pupils with excellent pastoral care. Residential pupils can approach staff regarding their worries and these are addressed sensitively. All admissions are planned and there is a very caring and structured induction process for new pupils. Communication between care, health and educational staff is extremely effective, which enables children to quickly settle in the school and residential provision. The accommodation for resident groups in each house is domestic in style, comfortable and well maintained. It also has specialist equipment such as fire evacuation chairs for use in the event of an emergency.

Residential pupils are empowered to make a positive contribution towards their school life. This level of positive engagement enables pupils to develop; this in turn helps them overcome barriers that have previously hindered their learning and attainment. Pupils are afforded an excellent

range of extra-curricular and leisure opportunities. They also have many opportunities to build social networks such as going to disco's and being involved in a local allotment. This has enabled them to grow a range of plants, herbs and vegetables which leads to good personal development and a sense of personal achievement.

The placement planning for young people is extremely thorough. Plans detail residential pupil's needs and these are regularly reviewed. Young people are encouraged to contribute their views to reviews as well as through direct work on a one-to-one basis. Access to specialist health input such as physiotherapy, the on-site nurse and 'mobility' ensures that young people are receiving the right level of individual care in a supportive and caring environment. This ensures staff are able to meet children's individual needs. Equality and diversity issues are positively addressed in both daily living and planning for care which take into account, for example, ability and faith.

The school has effective systems for the safe handling and storage of medicines. Residential pupils have health care plans which are very detailed with their health needs and the action required to meet those needs. Staff actively encourage residential pupils to enjoy and participate in healthy activities, experiences and to take responsibility for their own health and fitness. This demonstrates a commitment to providing residential pupils with positive, healthy and stimulating experiences, while adopting an organised and safe approach.

Catering is very well managed and specialist diets are catered for, such as vegan and halal along with some personal unusual sandwich filling preferences. Meal times are sociable events and good use is made of the well equipped kitchen/diners within each of the residential houses. Older and more able residential pupils have access to domestic washing machines which further promotes the acquisition of life skills. Residential pupils show pride in their warm and relaxed accommodation and this supports their learning.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The safety and well-being of residential pupils is outstanding. This is because staff have an excellent understanding of the safeguarding procedures and are suitably trained in child protection. They are extremely aware of the diverse needs and behaviours of the residential pupils and how these may impact upon them. The school has appropriate policies and procedures to take decisive action to safeguard residential pupils in conjunction with external agencies. Throughout the school there are signs and details about safeguarding with contact details clearly visible. Young people are aware of who to contact, including independent people should they have any concerns. This enables staff, young people and visitors to have an excellent understanding about the roles of people involved in safeguarding in school and beyond.

There are robust systems in place for the safe recruitment of staff, which assess their suitability to work with young people. Visitors are monitored and effectively chaperoned at all times. Staff provide an excellent level of supervision for residential pupils based on their age, understanding and ability, to make sure they are safe in school and in the community. Residential pupils do not go missing. Although, there are clear procedures in place which are understood by all staff should this occur.

There are very clear and effective procedures in place to support young people should bullying or targeting behaviour occur. Residential pupils could identify staff they could communicate to if they were sad and those spoken to said they felt safe at the school and residence. Some young people have very complex needs whereby communication can be difficult at times. Staff are very knowledgeable of the behaviours and mannerisms of the young people they care for and so know when a young person is unsettled or upset. This means they can reassure young people and seek additional emotional or health support if necessary.

Positive behaviour is exceptionally well promoted and is a key strength of the provision. Staff use various skills to encourage residential pupils to develop socially acceptable behaviours, in particular giving lots of praise and promoting positive play. They place great emphasis on building positive relationships with residential pupils. This proactive approach means that physical interventions are rarely ever used and sanctions are not given as they are inappropriate to the needs and understanding of the young people.

Residential pupils are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff conduct regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and secure.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management is outstanding. A variety of arrangements exist for monitoring the quality of care by the strong management team. The experienced and nurturing residential manager has really positive relationships with the young people in her care. She maintains a close day-to-day overview of each young person individually, alongside the general running of the residence. Any shortfalls are promptly identified and addressed. For example, medications procedures have become more robust and young people have access to computer consoles in residence since the last inspection, which were raised as minor points for improvement. Young people's progress is also monitored and the demonstrable differences the school has made to young people's outcomes are identified. This promotes and maintains high standards while contributing to young people's experience of being valued.

A Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the school and residence. In addition, parents and young people receive information, in a format they can understand, in their individual welcome pack. This clearly informs them about the school and the care that is to be provided. As a result young people are appropriately placed thereby enhancing their life experience.

No complaints have arisen since the last inspection. Very effective communication between the residence and parents ensure that parents feel confident that their concerns will be heard and acted upon. Young people's welfare, well-being and safety are promoted by this practice. The manager actively monitors the quality of care and uses the information gathered positively to further benefit young people. The independent visitor captures the views of young people and staff to drive forward improvement and reports are maintained within the school. The student council has lapsed since the last inspection although young people's views are obtained in a variety of ways ensuring their views are central to the running of the school and residence. Young people's records are securely kept and diligently maintained.

There are sufficient staff to supervise the young people and all staff members either hold the relevant National Vocational Qualification at level 3, diploma course or equivalent. Staff members report that they receive strong peer and management support and benefit from excellent formal supervision along with regular daily support. There is a key worker system to ensure that young people receive consistent continuity of care and end of term key worker reports are sent to parents which highlights their child's experiences over that term. These are insightful and detail all the achievements of the young people.

The residential manager and her deputy's motivation is driving forward continuous improvement. This level of motivation ensures young people are provided with a safe, caring and stimulating environment where they can develop and achieve in areas of physical and emotional well-being, sustain their educational attainment and have their spiritual and cultural belonging respected.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	104735
Social care unique reference number	SC040720
DfE registration number	341/7023

This inspection 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	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	11
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	2 to 19
Headteacher	Mr J P Byrne OBE
Date of previous boarding inspection	20/11/2012
Telephone number	0151 7331012
Email address	info@rsblind.org.uk

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