

Royal School for the Deaf Derby

Ashbourne Road, Derby, DE22 3BH

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All groups of pupils achieve well from their starting points. Pupils are prepared very well for next steps because the school supports their independence and awareness of their own needs extremely well.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make particularly good progress in their communication and social skills.
- Pupils behave well in the residence and in school. Those with additional behavioural, social and emotional needs make good progress in managing their own behaviour.
- Parents, pupils and partner agencies uniformly praise the ways the school keeps pupils safe.
- Strong partnerships and good attention to staff training mean that individual pupils who are higher attainers or show particular talents are provided for very well indeed.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils well and plan lessons which interest pupils and are generally well matched to their needs. Teaching assistants make a good contribution, helping pupils to achieve even more.
- The sixth form is good. Excellent partnerships and carefully thought-out support mean that sixth formers achieve well on their courses and make excellent gains in their personal development.
- School leaders, including governors, manage staff performance well and check carefully on how every pupil is doing, putting into place well-targeted interventions. The actions taken to improve literacy levels are paying off as standards in reading and writing are rising throughout the school.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always use information gained from assessment to challenge every pupil. They sometimes miss opportunities to strengthen pupils' English skills in different subjects.
- There are some inconsistencies in the application of policies and procedures in the school and in the residence.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and a social care inspector, accompanied by sign language interpreters.
- Inspectors visited 15 lessons involving 11 teachers. Over half were carried out with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors looked at pupils' work and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the school and residence leadership teams and the Chair of the Governing Body, as well as with parents and carers, a representative from a placing local authority and different groups of pupils and students.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and residence and looked at a number of documents including the school's own self evaluation, the records it keeps as to pupils' progress, health and safety and safeguarding information, and planning and monitoring documents.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 56 responses to the staff questionnaire including 10 point-in-time surveys from residential staff.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jeffrey Plumb

Additional Inspector

Gwen Buckley

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized residential non-maintained special school in the City of Derby, which draws its pupils and sixth form students from all over the Midlands as well as further afield.
- Just over a third of pupils aged from 9 to 19 years are resident for all or part of the week. Other pupils, including the youngest, travel in daily. Children in the Nursery class attend part time until they start full time in their Reception year.
- Most pupils are White British but a significant number come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. A high proportion arrives at any point during their education and as late as Years 10 and 11, sometimes from countries in which they have not previously been to school. Almost all of these have no or very incomplete English on entry.
- The school provides pupils with access to learning through British Sign Language (BSL) and English. Some pupils use British Sign Language as their first language on entry, but many are still learning it on entry to the school.
- Although the school has a high proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and a small but varying number of children who are looked after, it does not receive pupil premium for almost all of these pupils. The school does not receive the primary school sports funding.
- All pupils, except for four in the Nursery and Reception, have a statement of special educational needs. These younger children are undergoing assessment for a statement. Over 40% of pupils have additional learning needs to their deafness including: dyslexia; medical conditions; moderate and severe learning difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; and autistic spectrum disorders.
- All sixth formers and a few in Key Stage 4 study off-site at alternative provisions for a large part of their week. They have individual and small group support for key skills and to back-up their courses within the school's study centre according to their needs. The alternative providers include Derby College, Burton College, Top Tec, Camelion, Access Training and Woodlands School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - marking gives pupils clear feedback as to how they are doing and how to improve their work, and that pupils act on the guidance they are given
 - all teachers make effective use of information about what pupils already know and can do so that work is neither too easy nor too hard
 - teachers use probing questions to check on pupils' understanding and that they adjust their lessons to take account of pupils' responses
 - opportunities to develop English language and literacy skills are planned for and capitalised on more frequently in subjects other than English.
- Ensure that the application of policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the monitoring of risk assessments in the residence, is more consistent.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When pupils enter the school, whether in Early Years Foundation Stage or in at other times, their attainment is usually well below that typical of others of their age because of the challenges they have in communicating with others and accessing learning. The school rightly focuses on developing pupils' communication and engagement in learning as a basis for all future learning and for their independence.
- Children in Early Years Foundation make good progress in all areas of learning and particularly in their communication and use of sign language, their interest in books and stories, counting, and their personal social development. This sets them up well for Key Stage 1 because they are interested in what others have to say and in the world around them.
- Pupils in the primary department make similarly good progress, particularly in the use of British Sign Language for communication and learning and in mathematics. The new curriculum enthuses them so they engage with their lessons well. They make good progress in their use of visual phonics (signs and symbols representing the sounds letters make) and this means that they try very hard to sound out new words and work out their meanings. The most able read and write close to that of other pupils of their age, although most are still hesitant but enthusiastic readers by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils' work shows that pupils' writing similarly improves in line with their growing command of English.
- The school is adept at devising individualised programmes for pupils including those who arrive very late, those who are more able and those who have more complex needs. They make excellent use of partner schools, colleges and organisations to do this so that pupils attain a wide range of different qualifications from Entry Level to GCSE Advanced level qualifications and all sixth formers proceed to higher or further education.
- Pupils who join the school much later than others often make remarkable progress in a very short time, particularly in subjects like science and mathematics and in vocational subjects. All pupils achieve qualifications in British Sign Language, often at GCSE equivalent level and sometimes higher.
- Pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are vulnerable also achieve well from their starting points. Cohorts are so small that 'gaps' between these pupils and others vary from year to year. However, the school checks on each group in detail, including those with more complex needs such as autistic spectrum disorders, and is swift to put interventions in place and monitor them should any appear to be disadvantaged.
- Sixth formers make good and sometimes better progress in their college courses, key skills and in their vocational studies off-site. They achieve qualifications, such as in engineering, vehicle maintenance and animal husbandry as well as sciences and construction.
- More able pupils at Key Stage 3 and 4 achieve good GCSEs in subjects such as science, mathematics, art and occasionally English within the school and sometimes by attending a local comprehensive school. Students achieve well because the school works so effectively with its partners, checking constantly how students are doing and providing support and homework that is highly tailored to their needs.
- Often sixth form students retake their examinations and achieve much higher grades and qualifications in subjects like English and mathematics. This is because they are now very

strongly motivated to acquire them in preparation for their future careers and their language skills have improved sufficiently.

- There are particular strengths in art, design and technology and textiles, and increasingly high achievement in mathematics. This is because these subjects are well taught by teachers who are expert in their subjects as well as in how to meet the needs of pupils who are deaf.
- Increased attention to English language skills through close working with the speech and language therapist and the audiologist is accelerating progress in pupils' reading and writing skills. Reading test scores demonstrate pupils who have entered the school with limited or no reading skills, even at secondary level, to be accelerating their progress and reading for pleasure. This is all supporting their increased achievement in other subjects.
- The residence provides effective support for pupils, helping with homework and supporting pupils' numeracy and literacy through reading sessions and practical opportunities to apply them. This all means that pupils are very well set up for next steps in their life and education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have high expectations as to pupils' behaviour and contributions to lessons and pupils respond to these well. The new curriculum initiatives mean that the language and learning is often linked and this helps reinforce key words and concepts so that pupils learn them more quickly.
- Particular strengths of lessons are the communication skills of teachers and teaching assistants, together with the ways in which individuals who are late arrivals are intensively supported so that they swiftly improve their language skills.
- In most lessons a good balance of English and British Sign Language is used to support pupils' achievements. There are times, however, when English is not modelled enough either in writing or speech to accelerate pupils' progress even faster. Homework is used to good effect to support pupils' achievement further. The school regularly provides parents and carers with workshops and information to help them help their child.
- Although pupils receive good feedback in lessons as to how they are doing, the marking of their books is more variable and does not consistently help pupils to improve their work further.
- In the best lessons, teachers use both languages to challenge pupils to express themselves more accurately and to offer ideas and explanations. In these lessons, such as a Year 5 and 6 lesson on linking sentences and a Year 11 lesson on Romeo and Juliet, teachers make the learning highly interesting by asking challenging, probing questions that extend both pupils' ideas and language, and check on their understanding very well. A few teachers are not so skilled at using questions to check on pupils understanding or do not adjust the pace of their lesson sufficiently according to what they have found out.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and sometimes better because the support is individually tailored and highly focused on enabling students' key skills as well as their success on courses. Staff work very closely with alternative providers, checking carefully on how students are doing so that support is highly relevant and motivating to students.
- Whole-school training and a whole-school focus on reading is accelerating pupils' progress in reading and writing. Most staff make opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in their

lessons but there is still some inconsistency and, at times, teachers read for pupils rather than help them to read materials themselves. Sometimes this is because teachers have not used information about pupils' levels to tailor resources and tasks to pupils' needs and next steps.

- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the quality of teaching. They are skilled and knowledgeable about subjects they support and the learning needs of the pupils they work with.
- Good staff training systems and good deployment of staff ensures that new teachers, support and care staff quickly form effective teams around pupils so that teaching is never inadequate and often good or better.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in and around school. Those who have arrived with more negative attitudes to school engage increasingly well as they progress through the school. This is because all staff in the school and residence have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and manage behaviour well.
- The school is a harmonious community in which deaf and hearing staff provide highly effective role models as to how both cultures can be accessed and valued by all. Pupils and parents appreciate this and pupils feel privileged to have the opportunities they have to live in such a community.
- Pupils say they feel respected and valued within the school, often in ways in which they did not in previous placements. They are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of care that they receive in the school and the residence, and the help they receive towards managing their feelings and behaviour.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. In the sixth form, students articulate their needs and how they can manage these very well. This includes a good understanding the different technologies that will help them be alert and keep safe. A few in the residence wish they had more easy access to more of these aids, such as personal vibrating fire alarms, but also stress the good quality of care and support for independence that they receive.
- Pupils know a great deal about internet safety because this is explored thoroughly with them and about cyber and text bullying. They say there is almost no bullying in the school, demonstrating a mature attitude to individual pupils and students who have particular behavioural needs that might mean lessons are occasionally disrupted or pupils are off task.
- Pupils who have emotional or behavioural challenges and those who have autistic spectrum behaviours learn to manage these well. As a result, incidents decrease and their sociability and cooperation develops considerably. This enhances their learning, although a few continue to take up a considerable amount of staff time in lessons.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Some pupils have had poor attendance at previous placements and the school swiftly re engages almost all because pupils feel more relaxed within the school's approach to communication and 'deaf/hearing' cultures. Good use of alternative providers for more practical courses also motivates some further.
- Strong partnerships with the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services are valued by pupils, parents and carers, and support their emotional well-being at home and at school well.

The leadership and management is good

- The leadership of the school is highly ambitious for every pupil and young person, whenever they join the school, and is determined that they leave well set up for the next stages in their education or working life. This they achieve well because of the 'can do' attitude which means that they search for the most effective courses for late arrivals. Where appropriate, leaders seek inclusion opportunities in local schools for individual pupils who they feel need challenges they cannot make available within the school.
- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and of the sixth form are good because leaders are experts in the age ranges they lead and in meeting the specific needs of children and young people who are deaf. Leaders throughout the school have an accurate view as to what needs now to be done for the school to improve further.
- Good management of the performance of teachers and support staff has maintained the quality of teaching as good and is steadily improving it as training is carefully targeted. New teaching staff are paired well with experienced teaching assistants who have more fluent sign language skills, including deaf staff. Teaching and promotion up the pay scale has been carefully linked to pupil progress. Performance is monitored well by the senior leadership, so that most teaching is now good and occasionally outstanding.
- The school rigorously tracks each child's progress using a range of procedures to check that it is good enough. It is quick to put into place interventions for individuals and within subjects if checks find that some are plateauing or falling behind. Phase and subject leaders are now more actively involved in monitoring standards in their subjects and share information well about pupils as they transfer between departments. However, some subject leaders are very new and not all initiatives, such as those in writing in English, have yet had time to impact fully on pupils' achievements.
- The school has recently revamped its curriculum so that it uses a commercial international curriculum as the basis for its planning and the learning is more themed and motivating to pupils. This is already enthusing staff and pupils alike as well as ensuring that key language is supported in an integrated way. An excellent range of clubs, cultural and sports activities enrich the curriculum further. The school ensures that pupils and sixth form students are at ease in both hearing and deaf communities and supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well indeed.
- Pupils including sixth form students, have good access to independent information and advice from a visiting careers specialist. As well as to support from their local authorities and school staff.
- Excellent personal social and health education provision enables pupils to be very well informed about drugs, relationships and life choices. For example a workshop entitled 'Prison No way!' engaged pupils very well in discussions about the consequences of breaking the law as well as demonstrating their strong moral conscience.
- Excellent partnership working between the school's staff, including therapists and the audiologist as well as with outside agencies, are improving the rate of progress in areas such as spoken and written language and listening. Good use of external training and advice, and of alternative provisions, help tailor programmes more effectively to needs and particularly ensure that more able pupils can achieve.
- All safeguarding requirements are met and the school's procedures are highly regarded by its

social care partners. However, occasionally the paperwork in the residence is not rigorously completed in line with the agreed policies, for example in relation to the quality of risk assessments.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are committed and fulfil all of their responsibilities in relation to both the residence and school. They are determined that the school should improve further and quick to act with the leadership when any shortcomings are found. They check carefully on how the quality of teaching is improving, including the impact of performance management. They know the school's priorities well, asking pertinent questions and using training opportunities to improve their understanding further. They make sure that teachers' pay is linked to their performance and pupil achievement and monitor this well. They know how the very small amount of pupil premium has been spent and the difference it has made. They actively support the leadership in its work with local authorities to ensure pupils have the resources they should. Governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that pupils' statements of educational needs are complied with, allocating resources for example for additional speech and language and audiology support.

Outcomes for residential pupils are good

Quality of residential provision and care is good

Residential pupils' safety is good

Leadership and management of the residential provision is good

- The residential provision is good. An experienced and enthusiastic staff team understand residential pupils' complex needs and provide well for these. Residential staff effectively support residential pupils and their parents and carers. This ensures consistency of care and improved outcomes for residential pupils at school and at home, both in relation to their academic progress in school and in their personal development and emotional well being.
- The school ethos creates an atmosphere where young people are taken seriously, feel secure, valued and listened to. Residential pupils feel safe; they have trust in the staff who care for them and have people they can talk with if they want to discuss any issues.
- The emotional and physical wellbeing of residential pupils is seen as paramount and services such as Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) workers support staff to work with residential pupils who choose not to engage with the service.
- Good resources to meet pupils' complex needs are obtained and organised, alongside strong partnership working with families and other agencies to support residential pupils moving into independence.
- The management team and staff are strong advocates for residential pupils and ensure that all the services needed to meet their often complex needs are obtained. Carers and external professionals are extremely positive about the quality of care provided. They report that the tenacity of staff ensures services needed are provided from all relevant agencies. This ensures residential pupils are well supported in the school and at the time of transition into independence.
- Residential pupils are listened to and their views influence many aspects of the care. This

includes meals, activities and equipment provided. An example of this is the large cinema screen projector which greatly enhances residential pupils' experience when watching television.

- Staff are very skilled in providing direction and guidance so that residential pupils make informed and appropriate choices in terms of their own social behaviour and conduct. As a result, very few instances occur where there is a need for a child to be held or given a sanction.

- Medication is well managed. Residential pupils are encouraged and supported to develop the skills needed so that they can manage their own medication. Good support for keeping healthy through the range of clubs and activities available and the menu choices ensure that young people have good understandings and make good choices about healthy living.

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>

Residential provision		
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	113044
Social care unique reference number	SC002015
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	427148

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision 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	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	134
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	33
Number of boarders on roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Guy
Headteacher	Cheryll Ford
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2011
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