

# Royal School for the Blind

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

<b>Inspection dates</b>	13/11/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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 thrive, and continue to progress extremely well in managing their own behaviour and social interactions, because of the exceptionally high quality of relationships that are encouraged and nurtured by staff.
- Residential pupils' safety and well-being is of optimum importance. Residential pupils are safe and say that they feel safe because of the exceptionally well-implemented safeguarding procedures.
- Residential pupils' independence is a key strength of the provision. They are actively encouraged and supported to be as independent as possible.
- Staff work well with parents and professionals, to provide integrated and individualised packages of care that addresses the needs of residential pupils in a holistic and progressive way. Key worker's innate understanding of each residential pupils means they enjoy a bespoke care package which successfully encompasses their specific needs.
- Senior managers are enthusiastic and are highly committed and driven. This ensures the provision is continually evolving and means staff are able to effectively enhance the service to meet the ever changing needs of the residential pupils. The school continues to be an example of residential provision that stands out as a beacon for equality and diversity.

### 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 lead inspector to announce the inspection. The start of the inspection was delayed by one day due to an incident at the school over the weekend

The inspection took place over three days with feedback provided on day three.

During the inspection records and documentation were examined.

Interviews took place with the residential pupils, head of care, headteacher and staff to secure their views upon the quality of care provided.

A tour of the premises and grounds was undertaken.

Evening activities were also observed over two nights.

## Inspection team

Chris Scully

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 26 children on roll. Nine pupils use the residential provision; six male and three female pupils. An number of young people attend the afterschool club.

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 July 2013.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- enhance further the monitoring systems in place in particular reports are evaluative and clearly identify any shortfalls in record keeping such as a lack of cross-referencing, records correctly dated, maintenance issues and the action taken to address these issues
- ensure residential pupil's bathrooms provide a more homely environment

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils flourish, because of the exceptionally high quality of relationships that are encouraged and nurtured by staff. Residential pupil's laughter echoes around the residential units. They thoroughly enjoy spending time here with staff and their friends. Consequently, residential pupils have a strong sense of ownership of the setting. Residential pupils have a positive self-view and are increasing in confidence in their own abilities. They learn to be tolerant of one another. They happily tell visitors about how noisy some of the other young people can be but explain that 'it is alright'.

Residential pupils succeed as they live in a highly inclusive setting where their individuality is recognised, supported and celebrated. As a result, residential pupils are making excellent progress across all areas of their personal, social and emotional development. Residential pupils revel in the praise and encouragement bestowed upon them by staff.

Residential pupils thrive in an environment which is enhanced by a wide range of activities which truly engage their interests. These activities such as football clubs effectively enable residential pupils to develop social, interpersonal and team-building skills. As a result, residential pupils are continually improving in confidence and self-esteem because they are enabled to actively pursue their interests and develop skills for life. Excellent use of technology means residential pupils are able to communicate more effectively and enjoy a wider range of activities and learning opportunities.

The recent addition of the out of school club is a significant improvement in the ongoing development of the service. Parents say the club has given all young people a massive boost in their confidence and self-esteem. The club enables young people to meet with others in a safe, fun environment.

Residential pupils are becoming much more independent. This is because of the strong focus of helping them to develop life skills, such as managing their own personal care and going shopping, along with taking part in external social activities to develop social skills and citizenship. Mobility and orientation training is effectively mirrored within the residence. Consequently, residential pupils receive consistent messages and are able to make excellent progress.

Residential pupils happily tell visitors about their recent work experience and how they helped customers while on the customer service desk at the supermarket. Support systems are in place to ensure a smooth transition from the residential provision. This means residential pupils are able to successfully continue with their education when they leave the school and to engage in activities which they love, such as music.

Residential pupils have a strong 'voice' in the school and residence. This means residential pupils have a say in all aspects of their care, for example, how they wish to take their medication and the choice of foods that they eat. This means some residential pupils are becoming more adventurous and are trying different foods. The school council is going from strength to strength and is in the process of recruiting new members. Residential pupils feel empowered as their views are listened to and where possible acted upon.

Residential pupils understand the need to be fit and healthy and to undertake regular exercise. Health care plans are well written; are tailored to the specific needs of each young person and actively contribute to them remaining fit and healthy. In addition staff have an excellent knowledge of each residential pupil's individual needs. Highly effective support is provided by school nursing staff to ensure all young people remain fit and well.

Residential pupils have excellent opportunities to remain in contact with their friends who have moved on. Clear arrangements are in place for young people to talk to each other on the phone and catch up on 'all the gossip'. This means young people are able to sustain contact with people who are important in the same way as any other young people of a similar age would.

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

## **Outstanding**

The quality of the provision is outstanding. Parents say staff care for the residential pupils the same as they would do at home. Staff are very intuitive and know the residential pupils exceptionally well. A considerable amount of hard work, time and effort goes into ensuring communication between all staff is the very best. This is achieved as the school has established a climate of mutual trust and respect. Communication is highly effective between residential and school staff with regular team meetings and helpful exchange of information. This means residential pupils are provided with continuity of care that is tailored to their individual needs, because they are the main focus of any decision that is made about their lives.

It is abundantly clear that residential pupils are central to everything the school does. The staff ethos is that they will do whatever it takes to support and enhance the opportunities and life experiences for all young people. Residential pupils happily regale visitors about their trips to the theatre to see shows, and concerts. They are looking forward to seeing the pantomime at Christmas and have put forward suggestions for other shows they would like to see. Staff are highly committed to overcoming any barriers to residential pupils enjoying these outings. They work closely with theatres to ensure residential pupils are fully supported and are able to fully enjoy the experience.

Care plans are effective. They clearly demonstrate the diverse and complex needs of each young person. Consequently, a comprehensive picture is created which clearly identifies the residential pupils' care needs, which are met extremely well in day-to-day practice. Health care plans are well written and take into account the need to treat each residential pupil with dignity when carrying out intimate care needs. Ultimately young people are treated with the utmost care and respect. Residential pupils are encouraged as far as possible to undertake their own personal care needs for example brushing their teeth. Although staff do explain that some young people have a 'love/hate' relationship with their tooth brush.

Residential pupil's health care needs are exceptionally well supported. Residential pupils are actively encouraged where possible to have a say in how their medication should be administered. For example, some young people are able with the support of staff to administer their own medication. This provides young people with a level of control over what is a necessary procedure. Residential pupils are aware of the physiotherapy they need to undertake in order to stay fit, such as going for walks. However, they are not shy to tell staff that they have done enough today as, 'too much walking is not good for you.'

The residential setting is an integral part of the school. Excellent communication between the care and school staff means they are quickly alerted to any difficulties pupils may be experiencing. Consequently, they are able to initiate additional support to help the pupil overcome these such as additional support in class. Staff are highly committed to improving the outcomes for each residential pupil. They have high but realistic aspirations for each of them. As a result, residential pupils are making as much progress as possible in relation to their starting points.

Catering and residential staff are passionate about ensuring that residential pupils enjoy healthy and nutritious meals which meet their specific dietary requirements. Catering staff liaise closely with care staff and are constantly adapting and refining menus to meet their ever-changing need.

The accommodation provided is spacious and comfortable, and reflects the individual personalities and tastes of those who use it. There is sufficient diversity of accommodation, to ensure the needs of each residential pupil are met well.

Residential pupils bathrooms are well maintained, but compared to the rest of the residence feel clinical. This is in part to the equipment needed, however they detract from the homely environment the school is striving to achieve. Careful consideration has been given to residential pupils' mobility and to their visual impairments. Consequently, they are able to retain the maximum level of independence.

Contact with family members is exceptionally well supported. Some families have set times to call young people and this is used by staff as a learning opportunity for the young person. This is because they encourage them to answer the phone which builds upon their confidence and self-esteem.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Outstanding**

The safety and well-being of residential pupils is outstanding. Staff have an excellent understanding of the schools safeguarding procedures. All staff are suitably trained in child protection. They are extremely aware of the residential pupils' diverse needs and behaviours and how these may impact upon them. Residential pupils know who to talk to if they have any concerns. The use of pre-recorded message pods provides residential pupils with additional information on how to access agencies, such as Childline or the children's rights director.

Bullying and being missing is not an issue for residential pupils. There are clear procedures in place should this occur, which are known and understood by staff. Residential pupils say they are safe and feel safe here. They are provided with excellent levels of supervision based upon their age, understanding and ability to make sure they are safe in school and in the community. Excellent advice and support is provided about their personal safety, for example, how to cross the road safely and how to safely negotiate obstacles.

Positive behaviour is effectively and consistently promoted. Sanctions and physical interventions are not used. Staff are highly skilled in de-escalation techniques, which are implemented extremely well in practice. This is supported by the staff's thorough understanding of each young person, their vulnerabilities and how these impact upon their behaviour. Staff use consistent language and phrases so that residential pupils know what is happening around them. This effectively helps to reduce their anxieties. For example, providing ample reassurance to residential pupils with regards to the loud bangs around Bonfire night.

The commitment to promoting the health, safety and well-being of each residential pupil is an intrinsic part of the school. Residential pupils are able to take safe risks, such as jumping on the trampoline to exert some of their energies or walking with staff to the shops. Thus they are able to develop skills for life and independence.

A comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks protects residential pupils. Regular fire drills are undertaken, to ensure the premises are safe and secure. The implementation of 'grab bags' which contain items, such as additional socks, blankets and umbrellas provides additional comfort to residential pupils should they need to be evacuated at night or during inclement weather. The school has recently purchased evacuation chairs to speed up their evacuation times. Staff regularly practice with one another in the chairs to ensure they know how to evacuate young people safely in an emergency.

There are robust systems in place for the recruitment of staff, which assess their suitability to

work with young people. All persons who have access to young people for example governors, work persons and volunteers are vetted. 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.

### **Leadership and management of the residential provision   Outstanding**

The leadership and management are outstanding. The school has dealt with some unexpected challenges this year. Despite this the senior management team and staff have risen to these challenges and continued to provide excellent individualised care and support for each residential pupil.

The highly insightful management by senior managers actively promotes a culture that ensures pupils are always listened to and respected as individuals. This ensures that nothing no matter how minor is missed. Senior managers are highly committed to the ongoing development of the residential provision and are in the process of consulting how on this will further evolve. The school has an excellent track record of continuous development, for example, enhancing the role of the school council and ensuring residential pupils have access to various helplines for advice and support.

The Statement of Purpose provides information as to the care and support each residential pupil receives. The schools website is much more informative, the use of the video to hear what staff and young people have to say about the service is very insightful.

A variety of arrangements are in place for monitoring the quality of care by the management team and independent person. The experienced and caring head of care has very positive relationships with the young people. She maintains a close day-to-day overview of each young person individually, alongside the management of the residence.

Any shortfalls are identified and action is taken to address this. However, this is not consistently reflected in her monitoring reports of the service. Similarly reports by the independent person for the governor's lacks evaluation and does not provide information as to how the service can progress further. Both of these issues are primarily recording issues as it is clear that the head of care, staff and school are highly committed to providing exemplary childcare.

Records and documentation are very well maintained. There are some minor shortfalls in some records, for example, a lack of cross-referencing between records, young people not always asked to make a comment upon the records and the full date being recorded. These issues were immediately rectified at the inspection and are to be reflected in the monitoring of the home.

The headteacher, deputy head and head of care's visionary approach inspires others to continually improve upon the service they provide to residential pupils. Nothing is too much for staff who thoroughly enjoy their work and take great pleasure in each residential pupils achievements. Staff willingly go the 'extra mile' to ensure each residential pupils has exactly what they need to achieve their personal goals. This makes a massive difference to their lives and is reflected in the excellent outcomes they are achieving.

Visits to other schools have enabled staff to consider their own working practices and how they can move the service forward. For example, the training for staff about the support needed for young people with Autism who have a visual impairment. Staff work very well as a team. They have created a culture whereby each residential pupil is respected as an individual and their differences are accepted and celebrated.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104735
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC040720
<b>DfE registration number</b>	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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J P Byrne
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	01/07/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 7331012
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