

Inspection of an outstanding school: Royal School for the Blind (Liverpool)

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

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

Outcome

Royal School for the Blind (Liverpool) continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this school because leaders and staff provide them with a high-quality education. Throughout the classes, there is a buzz of eager activity as pupils learn new knowledge. Pupils said that they feel very happy and safe at the school. Teachers and support staff work well together to meet the complex needs of pupils exceptionally well. This includes meeting the needs of pupils who have visual impairment.

Leaders and staff hold high expectations for all pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils behave extremely well. On the brief occasions when pupils lose focus in their activities, staff are quick to bring pupils' attention back to their learning. Pupils said that leaders and staff resolve bullying quickly.

Pupils feel highly valued because staff respect what they say and do. Attractive displays of pupils' learning on walls around the school celebrate the high quality of their work and their involvement in educational trips. At breaktimes, staff give first-rate support for pupils' personal and social skills through worthwhile play activities.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders make certain that all staff have excellent knowledge of curriculum subjects and teaching. Subject leaders know their subjects in expert detail. Leaders ensure that the school's curriculum gives all pupils, including children in the early years and students in the sixth form, a wonderful education, adapted to their individual needs. Leaders set out the content of the curriculum in a logical order. They identify clearly the knowledge that staff will teach. Teachers double check that pupils' learning closely matches the targets in their education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Staff focus fully on teaching because of limited low-level disruption by pupils.

The high-quality curriculum and effective support ensure that pupils attempt reading and pre-reading activities confidently. Pupils, including children in the early years, enjoy their experience of books due to the encouragement that they receive from staff and leaders. Older pupils who are early readers showed attention and engagement when leafing through a book about sun hats. They pointed out particular features or objects, either naming them or responding to any questions from staff. As pupils move on through the school, the teaching of early reading focuses more on staff reading aloud to pupils. Staff also enhance stories and texts, for example using audio devices and other tactile resources to very good effect when teaching pupils to read. Where appropriate, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of phonics so that they read and spell words with independence. Pupils with visual impairment learn to spell their names using Braille.

Due to their complex needs, pupils make small but important steps in their learning. Experienced, skilful staff teach pupils to make many successful gains in their knowledge. Teachers revisit pupils' prior learning to help them to build on what they already know. For instance, in the Nursery class, staff help pupils to tolerate repeated sensory experiences, such as when staff count to three while simultaneously touching pupils' faces with a soft cloth. In the sixth form, staff thoughtfully help students to prepare for adulthood. Due to staff's consistent, expert attention to pupils' needs, pupils throughout the school achieve exceptionally well.

Teachers very skilfully use assessment information about pupils' learning and development to improve teaching. Staff celebrate pupils' learning successes and share this information with parents and carers. Leaders make full use of the expertise of other professionals to help improve teaching. For example, specialists in visual impairment train staff to understand and use multisensory resources, such as Braille, to support pupils.

Leaders and staff give an exceptional focus to the wider development of pupils, including children in the early years and students in the sixth form. They prioritise pupils' independence and life skills as essential learning. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has curtailed many school trips and reduced the number of visitors to the school, leaders are re-establishing these opportunities for pupils. For instance, pupils made a recent visit to a pumpkin farm where they learned how to make pumpkin soup. Pupils enjoy a range of exciting activities, such as swimming, zoo trips and shopping. They learn to apply their skills, such as using money, as well as becoming more independent. Staff give pupils regular guidance about possible careers. This includes explaining the opportunities to complete volunteering and work experience in the local community.

Leaders support the work of staff very well, including through access to training and development opportunities. They ensure that staff have a reasonable workload. Teachers and teaching assistants love being part of the staff team at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff hold up-to-date knowledge on safeguarding. They understand the many

potential risks to pupils' welfare and safety. Leaders ensure that staff fully understand the safeguarding policies of the school. Leaders have effective systems in place to monitor and support the needs of all pupils. Leaders and staff are vigilant for any signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. They act effectively to ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded. They engage well with other agencies and professionals where required.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in May 2011.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	104735
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10199600
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Withey
Headteacher	Vicki Dwyer
Website	www.rsblind.org
Date of previous inspection	26 January 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with visual impairments. Most pupils also have additional severe or profound learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- This inspection covered the education provision at the school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, other members of staff and the chair of governors. A telephone conversation was held with

the head of the sixth form. These discussions centred on the quality of education, the wider curriculum of the school, aspects of pupils' behaviour, and leadership and management.

- An inspector spoke by telephone with the local authority commissioner for special educational needs and/or disabilities and with a parent.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered information about the curriculum in food technology.
- Inspectors evaluated responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. Inspectors also considered responses from school staff to an Ofsted questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke with staff, the chair of governors and pupils about how the school keeps pupils safe. An inspector examined the single central record of the checks made to ensure staff are suitable to work at the school. Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding policy and procedures.

Inspection team

Jon Ashley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021