

Royal School for the Blind

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

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The Royal School for the Blind, Liverpool, is a non-maintained charitable school. It provides education and accommodation for children with visual impairment and/or a wide range of complex needs. The school provides up to 90 places for children aged between two and 19 years. It offers residential provision for up to six children at any one time, in a detached house in the school grounds. Children use the residential provision in a mix of Monday to Thursday placements and overnight stays. The school's multidisciplinary approach includes the involvement of specialist staff such as teachers, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and a speech and language therapy team.

The experienced residential manager has been in post for two years and has a relevant qualification as required by the national minimum standards.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 July 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their stays at the residential provision. They are provided with a homely and comfortable place to stay. Children build secure and trusting relationships with the staff looking after them. They are treated with dignity and respect. Inspectors observed children to be relaxed, happy and comfortable while spending time with staff.

Leaders and managers work positively with parents and social workers to agree a plan of care for the children. One parent said, 'The provision has been a revelation. The staff show that they truly understand and, what's more, love my son, which is incredibly reassuring and comforting.'

Children are welcomed into the provision sensitively. Careful consideration and planning are given to children's transitions to the residential setting. Senior managers have identified that the children require a child-friendly statement of purpose, so they know what to expect when they come to stay. This should be implemented without delay.

Children make progress because of the time that they spend at the provision. They have opportunities to develop their daily living skills to prepare them for adulthood. Children also access various recreational and leisure activities, including community-based activities. This provides children with the opportunity to engage in after-school clubs with their peers, to develop their confidence and their self-esteem.

Children enjoy their education. Children's targets from their education, health and care plans are embedded in their placement plans. This ensures that all specialist professionals in the school work together consistently to meet children's needs.

Staff undertake relevant training from qualified professionals to support children to manage their complex health needs. Staff understand children's individual health and care plans and are confident in implementing children's medical arrangements.

Children are listened to and their views are promoted. Some children are active in the school's council. House meetings take place regularly and enable the children to come together to share their views about their stay. For children who are non-verbal, the staff use their positive relationships and knowledge of the children to advocate on their behalf.

Children have access to an independent person, who they enjoy spending time with on activities and at holiday clubs. However, the independent person is also the care governor. An independent person for children is to be appointed, who is not responsible for the leadership and governance of the school.

The staff team goes over and above to support children and their families. For example, families have been supported with respite care through the school breaks and the senior leadership team arranged for hampers to be sent to families over the Christmas holidays.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children are protected from harm. They are supported to feel safe and secure in the residential provision. Parents are confident in the staff team's ability to keep their children safe.

Risks are identified and understood by the staff team. All children have individualised behaviour support plans to enable staff to support them in times of crisis. Inspectors observed staff using agreed de-escalation strategies effectively with children to help them regulate their behaviour and to minimise risks.

The head of care, the residential manager and designated safeguarding lead work seamlessly together to protect children. They meet on a weekly basis to review any concerns and to implement any required changes to improve safeguarding practice.

There is a proactive response to safeguarding within the residential service. All staff have now been trained in the new school online child protection management system. This means that there is improved oversight by leaders and managers in relation to children's safety. It has also promoted individual accountability, so that all staff are clear on their responsibilities for reporting and recording any concerns.

Staff undertake regular training to develop their broader understanding of safeguarding. This includes courses such as Prevent, child exploitation, online safety and keeping children safe in education. The safeguarding governor has also accessed training to help them understand their role and responsibilities. They also work closely with the designated safeguarding lead and the senior leadership team in residential.

There are good relationships with other internal and external professionals involved in safeguarding children. Leaders and managers are positive role models. They demonstrate professional curiosity to ensure that children's safety is at the front and centre of the service.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is evidence of a strong leadership team overseeing residential care and working effectively with the school as one. Leaders and managers work collaboratively and have a shared vision for the residential provision. They understand children's individual plans, celebrate achievements and set aspirational targets for children.

The residential manager has increased responsibility of the residential provision. She participates in key leadership meetings and is provided with effective support and guidance from the head of care. She understands the provision's strengths and actively looks for ways to make improvements to the quality of care. However, her oversight of children's risk assessments is not always consistent. Following one incident, the residential manager did not update one child's risk assessment to provide staff with clear guidance to follow.

The provision is properly staffed and resourced. There are effective working relationships between the teaching and residential care staff. Teaching staff often work in the residential provision. This ensures continuity of care for the children during their stays.

Staff receive regular supervisions to develop their practice and skills. A new supervision record has been introduced to promote reflective practice. Staff have undertaken a wide range of training that is bespoke to children's individual needs. This has enabled staff to have a broader understanding of children's care plans and the support they require.

The headteacher's self-assessment report provides a reflective account of the effectiveness of the residential provision and the improvements that have been made to support positive experiences for children. It is linked with the provision's development plan, which provides a comprehensive action plan for future developments.

There is a strong governor presence in the residential provision. The governors have a good understanding of the children using the service. They are enthusiastic about the residential provision and regularly spend time with the children and staff team. Governors' meetings are used to scrutinise the service, to share ideas to develop the provision and to improve children's overall experiences during their stays.

The independent visitor reports drive improvements in the quality of care, by making clear and appropriate recommendations in line with the national minimum standards. The independent visitor speaks with children, staff and relevant professionals as part of the visits. The residential manager, head of care and headteacher meet regularly with the independent visitor to ensure that all recommendations have been actioned.

Leaders and managers have successfully addressed the point for improvement made at the last inspection. All national minimum standards have been met.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Points for improvement

- School leaders should prepare a children's version of the statement of purpose which is communicated to them using appropriate methods.
- School leaders should ensure that there is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school. The school should have processes in place to ensure this is the case. Specifically, the residential manager's oversight of records should be consistent to ensure that, following an incident, children's risk assessments are updated without delay.
- School leaders should ensure that there is at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the 'independent person'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC040720

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Vicki Dwyer

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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