

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Royal School for the Deaf Derby

Ashbourne Road, Derby, Derbyshire DE22 3BH

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 December 2024

Outcome

Royal School for the Deaf Derby has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a truly bilingual approach to all aspects of school life, with communication being the golden thread through everything. British Sign Language (BSL) and speech and language therapy are the fundamental parts of all pupils' learning. As a result, from the early years to the sixth form, pupils develop the skills needed to be strong BSL communicators. Inspirational deaf and hearing staff inspire pupils to believe they can achieve anything. Consequently, pupils develop pride in their deaf identity and culture.

Throughout the school, staff and pupils have warm and strong relationships. Pupils feel safe and happy in school. They trust adults will help them if they need it. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in class and around the school.

Expectations are high for all pupils. Staff know pupils well and work effectively to support them. Pupils work hard to achieve the ambition that staff have for them. As a result, these expectations are typically achieved. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning.

The school is proud to serve the pupils and families in the deaf community and does it well. The school offers free BSL tuition to parents and carers and frontline services.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have continued to drive improvements at the school, including refining its ambitious curriculum. The school has clearly identified the vital knowledge that all pupils must learn. This ensures that pupils learn new things in a logical sequence and achieve well. Pupils learn about deaf culture and history. This enables pupils to develop an understanding of their rights and own identity. The school also ensures that pupils learn a broad range of academic subjects. Students in the sixth form

benefit from a curriculum offer that meets their future aspirations. Students can select to follow vocational and academic courses at local providers while combining their studies in BSL and speech and language therapy in the school. An individualised curriculum and timetable provide sixth-form students with opportunities to prepare for adulthood.

Teachers are passionate and knowledgeable. Staff typically present new learning effectively so that pupils understand it well and build on what they already know. Staff understand the impact deafness can have on learning. They use strategies and adaptations to reduce this impact. This supports pupils to make progress through the curriculum. For example, staff use BSL widgets to support language development. However, sometimes, the activities staff choose do not match the aims of the curriculum. This means that some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

All pupils benefit from speech and language therapy as part of their routine timetable. The school's therapists suggest interventions and activities to ensure that the right support is in place to allow pupils to access the curriculum. As a result, pupils achieve well in lessons and are able to communicate effectively with staff and each other. Pupils engage in their curriculum with confidence, expressing their views and opinions. This makes a positive impact on their attainment and prepares pupils well for their next steps.

All pupils who attend this school, from the early years to the sixth form, have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Some pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) beyond their deafness. There are suitable processes in place to identify pupils with additional SEND. Staff work closely with therapists to ensure that these wider needs are met.

The school has prioritised reading. Pupils benefit from the school's effective approach to early reading and phonics. When children start in the nursery, they learn the signs for different phonics. Pupils practise their phonics knowledge by reading books that are carefully matched to the sounds and letters that they know. Staff are well trained to deliver the school's chosen programme, which ensures that pupils gain the skills they need to read and write in English. This enables pupils to learn in other subjects because they can read, comprehend and record their learning in English, as well as use BSL. Guided reading sessions and whole-class signed reading sessions inspire pupils to develop a love of reading.

Learning BSL starts as soon as children join the school. Children in the early years, sometimes with few or no language skills, learn how to communicate effectively using BSL. Consequently, children quickly learn the skills they need to access different subjects. This also enables them to learn routines quickly. They start to develop independence and learn to make positive choices. Older pupils are respectful and well-mannered. Classrooms are calm learning environments.

Pupils take an active role in the school community through the school council. They have a regular focus on life skills, personal safety and financial awareness to help prepare them for life in modern Britain. Pupils value cultural experiences, for example visiting museums

and going on school exchange visits to Germany. The careers programme helps pupils to know about the variety of options available to them when they leave school.

There have been changes to the senior leadership at the school since the last inspection. Leaders at all levels have taken effective action to ensure continued improvement. Governors and trustees provide a careful balance of support and challenge to the school. Staff appreciate that their well-being and workload are important to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the activities staff choose do not match the aims of the curriculum. This means that some pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well, to enable pupils to make strong progress across all curriculum subjects.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	113044
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10347388
Type of school	All-through
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Janet Hall (co-chair) Heather Flockton (co-chair)
Headteacher	Paul Burrows
Website	www.rsdd.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Royal School for the Deaf Derby is a non-maintained special school for deaf children and young people aged three to 19 years. Most places are funded by local authorities from across the Midlands region, but also further afield.
- The school is overseen by a charitable trust.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school has provision for two- three- and four-year-old children.
- There are currently no pupils in Year 1.
- The school commissions places for sixth-form students in a variety of colleges as part of their sixth-form academic curriculum. Students attend these colleges on a part-time basis with the rest of their academic study, including BSL, based in the school.

Students remain on the school roll at The Royal School for the Deaf Derby while at their college placement. This inspection focused on provision in the school setting.

- The school does not currently use alternative provision for any other year groups.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2022 and one of the two deputy headteachers took up their post in September 2023.
- The school has two co-chairs of the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The school offers boarding residential provision to pupils. The residential provision was previously inspected in November 2024 and was judged to be outstanding. For this inspection, the inspectors inspected the education provision at the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors were supported by BSL interpreters, who are independent of the school and Ofsted.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and had a discussion with the chair of the charitable trust.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff including teachers, support staff and therapeutic staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation on the school website and documentation relating to the governance of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents and records linking to attendance and behaviour, and school improvement documentation.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through discussions and a consideration of their responses to the online surveys, including the free-text facility in Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

Matthew Rooney

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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