



RNIB Rushton School and Children's Home

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122155
Local Authority Coventry
Inspection number 300158
Inspection date 29 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mike Kell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Wheelwright Lane
School category	Non-maintained		Ash Green
Age range of pupils	5–19		Coventry CV7 9RA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	024 76369500
Number on roll (school)	17	Fax number	024 76369501
Number on roll (6th form)	7		
Appropriate authority	The proprietor	Headteacher	Adam Ockelford
			Steve Warren
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
5–19	29 January 2007	300158

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is owned by the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB). All the pupils have a statement of special educational need for visual impairment and additional multiple disabilities. The school offers a residential facility and so it takes pupils from a number of widely dispersed local authorities. The majority of the pupils are boarders. The residential facility is registered as a children's home and is inspected by inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI). The school shares a site with a local authority school that also specialises in teaching pupils with visual impairment. Plans for the RNIB to purchase and develop the entire site are very well advanced, but contracts and planning approval are not quite finalised.

The majority of the pupils have a White British background, and all of them speak English as their first language. There is an uneven age spread of pupils. Very few of them are under the age of 11 years. Most of the pupils are boys.

There have been significant management changes since the school moved to its present site in June 2002. The headteacher left in the following year and there have been four acting headteachers since then. The deputy headteacher has been installed as the current acting headteacher, but he had only been in this post for three weeks prior to the inspection. Interviews for a permanent headteacher are now imminent. There has also been a recent restructuring of the leadership team. The post of Director of Centre has been established recently and an appointment made, and a new leadership and management team structure as been implemented.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Rushton School is a satisfactory school with satisfactory leadership and management. The provision for post-16 pupils is also satisfactory. The residential provision makes a good contribution to extending the pupils' learning and enhancing their personal development. The school has good links with parents and other partners.

The school has worked hard to maintain a satisfactory quality of education through a very turbulent period, although it is now entering a period of much greater stability. The frequent changes of headteacher made it difficult for the school to retain continuity. This has affected the quality of its self-evaluation which, although satisfactory, has lacked a consistent focus on improvement through a planned programme of monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work. The few senior staff who have been in post throughout this period have done a good job in holding on to the support of parents, maintaining stability amongst the staff and retaining some degree of consistency. Their work is now being supported by other positive developments. For instance, the current headteacher has already made an impact, governors are becoming increasingly influential and the Director of Centre is now providing effective oversight of the school's strategic direction and day-to-day operations.

The pupils' standard of work is exceptionally low compared with national expectations, as a result of pupils' learning difficulties. Their achievements are satisfactory. They make satisfactory progress towards achieving their learning targets in individual education plans (IEPs). The targets are challenging but the pupils' progress towards achieving them is not assessed consistently. The school has only recently begun to assess pupils against p level criteria. Therefore, it is not yet in a position to track the progress they make over time against these nationally agreed levels. As a result, senior managers cannot compare the relative performance of different groups of pupils or their achievements in different subjects.

The pupils receive good care, guidance and support. They live and work in safe environments in which they are well looked after. They receive good levels of individual attention and constructive advice about developing as young people. Consequently, the pupils make good progress in their personal development. They attend school regularly, behave well and have good attitudes to their learning. They enjoy being at school and they are prepared well for when they leave. They receive less effective guidance about their learning because the limitations in assessment procedures reduce teachers' ability to use detailed information to let the pupils know how they can improve.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers know their pupils well. They employ a good multi-sensory approach to stimulate learning. Teachers plan what individual pupils are expected to learn in each lesson, but not always in the detail needed to enable them to check how successfully they have learned. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils satisfactorily. The input of a variety of therapists puts pupils in the best position possible to make the most of what the curriculum offers.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The post-16 pupils have recently moved to more self-contained accommodation. This is better suited to meeting their learning, social and personal needs. They are taught satisfactorily. Teaching is enthusiastic and lessons proceed at a rapid pace but sometimes this means that the pupils do not have sufficient time to consider what is being asked of them and to make their response. A good level of care, guidance and support promotes the pupils' personal development well. There are good procedures for preparing the pupils for leaving school, including visits to different places of work. The curriculum is satisfactory and is supported by a good use of local facilities such as shops.

The pupils make satisfactory progress. The barrier to their achieving better lies in teachers' limited use of assessment to monitor their pupils' achievements in working towards individual targets and p levels. This diminishes the impact of the guidance they can offer in helping the pupils to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

CSCI inspectors made an unannounced visit in August 2006. They concluded that the school met fully all but two of the national minimum care standards that were evaluated. They were nearly met and the school has since made good progress, with identified action points addressed fully. The inspectors reported that the school was good at making sure that the pupils were kept safe, that their needs were met and that they received individual attention. These positive features were confirmed during the inspection, and they were supported by the strong links that exist between the school and the residential areas. This close liaison enhances the pupils' personal development well. For instance, the residential social workers (RSWs) set the pupils personal development targets that dovetail with those set by teachers. Handover books between school and the residential units ensure that teachers know how the pupils have been overnight, and RSWs know what sort of day the pupils have had. This enables RSWs to give good support for the work pupils do in class through activities such as helping with homework and reading stories. A good range of additional activities develop further the pupils' social awareness and give them opportunities to practise their communication skills in real-life situations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement routine and robust procedures for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work in order to make self-evaluation a more effective process.
- Monitor more accurately the pupils' progress towards achieving their individual targets and use this information to plan lessons that fully meet individual needs and to advise pupils about what they need to do to improve further.

- Ensure the full implementation and use of the new system of recording the pupils' achievements against p levels in order to track their progress over time.
- Analyse assessment data and use this information to compare the relative performance of different groups of pupils and their achievements in different subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The extreme nature of the pupils' learning difficulties means that their standard of work remains exceptionally low throughout their time in school.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. All the pupils make strides in their ability to communicate and they have increased confidence in doing so. For instance, some of the younger pupils play untuned instruments as they listen to music. Older pupils listen carefully to stories and respond with the right actions at the appropriate time, like stamping. Some of the more competent communicators achieve well in recognising letters of the alphabet.

The progress that the pupils make varies due to inconsistencies in the effectiveness of monitoring their achievements. When they are monitored closely and targets are changed regularly, with activities matching learners' needs, the pupils make good progress. In other instances, targets and associated activities are insufficiently challenging, or excessively so. As a result, progress in such cases is no better than satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their mobility and communication skills benefit greatly from adults' concentration on encouraging their development. The high quality interactions that the pupils have with the many adults who work with them make a significant contribution to their personal development. These exchanges develop the pupils' self-confidence and their competence to make informed decisions based on a growing awareness of the implications of these choices. Older pupils develop a good awareness of choices on leaving school. The pupils make good progress in their understanding of a safe and healthy lifestyle. A few are beginning to keep themselves safe, such as moving around the site safely and checking that the brakes on their wheelchairs are engaged when they stop. Older pupils know that they should not talk to strangers. Some pupils show that they are beginning to understand a healthy diet as they choose fruit at lunchtime as they know it is good for them. Pupils make the best contribution they can to the community through their involvement in fundraising for charities and by taking on some responsibilities around school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Lessons are generally lively occasions that the pupils enjoy. Teachers try hard to involve all pupils. They do this through using an approach that encourages learning by stimulating a variety of senses and this results in satisfactory learning. The input of learning support assistants is not as effective as it should be, because some are inclined to sit back if the pupil is not causing any disturbance. Despite examples of good practice, opportunities are not routinely taken to encourage pupils to be active participants in their learning.

Teachers employ a satisfactory range of communication approaches, although on a few occasions they do not give pupils sufficient time to respond through their preferred communication method. Pupils' targets are not used well enough in lesson planning and assessment does not provide fully accurate feedback on the amount of learning that has taken place. This in turn limits the effectiveness of planning future lessons to fully meet individual needs and so enable pupils to make better progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Because of the complexity of their learning difficulties, the great majority of the pupils go into sheltered accommodation when they leave school. The school recognises this in its curriculum. It is planned appropriately to give pupils the skills required to make the most of the support that will be available during adult life. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, showing a satisfactory improvement from the last inspection and it allows the pupils to experience a wide range of subjects. A prime focus is on encouraging the pupils' acquisition of communication skills and so promoting their personal development. The school is successful in doing this and, as a result, the pupils make good progress in these areas. The curriculum provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11 provides a good opportunity for them to receive appropriate accreditation for their work and prepares them well for life after school.

Long-term planning to meet pupils' social, emotional and physical needs is good. Short-term planning is only satisfactory as it does not always acknowledge individual pupils' needs. The school has done all that it can to improve the accommodation. It is now satisfactory, again showing improvement since the last inspection. Links with local organisations and a wide range of visits to places of local interest enhance the curriculum for all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils, with rigorous procedures for keeping them safe. Good links with support services and parents ensure that the pupils' individual needs are catered for well. The parent who commented, 'The staff are extremely helpful and accommodating to both parents and pupils' is right. Relationships are very good. The pupils receive a high level of individual attention to help them achieve challenging personal targets. This promotes their personal development well. Staff encourage the pupils to communicate with others, to become more aware of themselves and their environment and to improve their confidence when moving around the site. This enables them to become independent as far as they are able, such as in making sensible choices and decisions.

The guidance given to the pupils to help them to extend their learning is less effective. Appropriate long-term targets are broken down well into smaller short-term targets in IEPs. Assessment is not effective in determining the day-to-day progress made by all pupils in working towards these targets. This reduces the impact that teachers have on advising the pupils how they can achieve more.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Each interim headteacher has played a part in maintaining the school on an even keel. However, the temporary nature of each appointment has meant that none could really influence how the school operates or make long-term strategic decisions. Even so, collectively they monitored the school's work effectively enough for satisfactory progress to have been made in addressing the development areas identified in the last report. As a result, the accommodation is now satisfactory. In addition, a personal, social and health education programme is in place and governance is now satisfactory, showing an important improvement since the last inspection. However, monitoring and evaluation procedures have lacked a consistent focus on all aspects of the school's work. The acting headteachers were supported in their work by a governing body that became increasingly influential and the continuity in overall leadership and management that the Director of Centre has provided. In addition, the continuity and consistency provided by senior staff who have been in post throughout the period of acting headship appointments has been invaluable.

The current headteacher has built on his predecessors' work well. Effective monitoring has picked up those features of the school's work that need further improvement. Weaknesses in the tracking of pupils' progress through their IEPs have been identified and the assessment of the pupils' achievements against p levels has been introduced. There is now an effective short-term development plan although the school is aware that this needs to be extended to give staff and governors a clear long-term strategic

direction. A more active governing body, with clearer responsibilities, and the Director of Centre are in a good position to build on the support that they gave previous headteachers by working with the current headteacher to implement the development plan and to monitor the work of the school work more effectively. It is recognised that in order to do this, the school will have to introduce systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating its work in order to drive forward improvement. There is now a satisfactory capacity to develop further.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so kind and friendly when we visited your school. We enjoyed our day with you.

Rushton School is a satisfactory school. It does some things well. The boarding units are good. The staff help you a lot and care for you carefully. The school is good at helping you to develop as young people and prepare you well for leaving school. The staff care a great deal and they look after you well. You are learning a lot about keeping safe and being healthy. You are good at going to school and you behave well and enjoy yourselves while you are there.

Your lessons and what you are expected to learn are satisfactory. The senior teachers are doing a reasonable job in running the school. They want to make your learning better. We have given them some ideas how to do this:

- The senior teachers need to make sure that they know how well the school is doing.
- Your teachers should look more closely at what you have already done before giving you new work.
- The teachers should measure how well you do in your work.
- The senior teachers need to check that all of you are doing as well as you can.

Thank you once again. We wish you lots of luck in the future.