

# Royal Schools for The Deaf and Communication Disorders

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106166
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	300952
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kathleen Smith HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	52
6th form	24
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tony Snape
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Hilary Ward
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Stanley Road Cheadle Hulme Cheadle Cheshire SK8 6RQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6100100
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 6100101

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<b>Age group</b>	4–19
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

## Description of the school

Royal School for the Deaf and Communication Disorders (RSDCD) is a non maintained residential and day school, run by a charity. At the time of the inspection, the age range of pupils was 9 to 19 years. All of the students have statements of special educational needs and have severe and complex learning difficulties combined with significant communication disorders, including very limited or no oral language. A significant number of students are autistic and demonstrate challenging behaviours in addition to their learning difficulty and/or disability. There are 52 students on roll, comprising of 38 boys and 14 girls. There are a small number of students from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds where English is an additional language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with good capacity to improve. All pupils reach standards appropriate to their capabilities and starting points. Their progress in communication and social skills is particularly good. Teaching and learning are effective throughout the school. As a result, students make good progress. Behaviour management is very effective and also leads to clear improvements. The individualised education and care programmes are very well suited to students' needs. Pupils are given a stimulating range of activities which enhances their enjoyment and motivation to learn. However, the quality of target setting is not consistent across the school which results in some students' achievements not being captured well enough.

Pupils are cared for very well and their personal development is good. The staff and students receive excellent support from the variety of multi-professionals engaged with the school and especially from the speech and language therapists. Their support is increasingly integrated into the students' educational day and they are making valuable contributions to the good progress made. Staff are dedicated and demonstrate high levels of commitment to ensure students' needs are met. Parents are very positive about the school and are supportive of all that it does.

The quality of leadership and management is good and ensures that each learner's needs are met effectively. There is a strong ethos of respect and care throughout the school and a commitment to continued improvement. Quality assurance arrangements have improved but are still not rigorous enough. The school does not capture or analyse data on student achievement in sufficient detail to identify trends and patterns of achievement. Self-evaluation is accurate overall but too descriptive and judgements are not sufficiently based on substantive evidence. However, areas for improvement are clearly identified and contained within the closely monitored school improvement plan. Governors discharge their duties well. Financial management is good and the school provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The post-16 provision is good and builds effectively on the work undertaken at Key Stage 4. Students make good progress across all areas of their development, especially in improving their communication and social skills, including making choices and expressing their likes and dislikes. Most students take part in work-placements and increase their experience and understanding of the adult world.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff successfully encourage students to become more independent. The curriculum is also good and shows progression from what younger students are learning, helping them with the transition towards adulthood. Communication development remains at the centre of what students learn. Tutorials provide valuable opportunities for staff to meet with each student to discuss the progress being made and plan further activities to help them meet their targets. Leadership and management are good. However, too little information is gathered at a whole school level about how well students are learning to provide a secure basis for planning further improvements.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The residential provision makes a good contribution to students' welfare and to their education. There is very effective liaison between care staff and education staff. This includes regular meetings with students for the joint setting and reviewing of targets.. Care plans are detailed and regularly reviewed. They are well structured and include a suitably wide range of targets for learning. However, progress towards some targets is not referred to in subsequent plans and some targets are repeated without an indication why this is so. Contact with parents is well managed, so that they receive regular updates on their children's progress and are able to contribute to the targets set for them. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including swimming, trampoline and other sports, art and craft work, and scouts. Residential students also go on extended trips, including camping and outdoor activities.

The residential provision within the school was recently inspected with respect to the National Minimum Standards for children's homes. A copy of this report is available by application from the Commission for Care Standards Inspections (CSCI).

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of target setting to ensure students' achievements are captured successfully across all aspects of their individual programmes.
- Improve the analysis of data to enable the school to evaluate and compare overall student achievements across all subject areas.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Owing to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities the standards students achieve are below those expected of students of a similar age nationally. However, students make good progress given their starting points and disabilities. This is confirmed by observations of work in lessons. Emphasis is appropriately placed on the development of communication skills and students make particular progress in this area because of the good quality of teaching, combined with excellent speech and language therapy. Records of the students' progress are kept and annual assessments are made. However, as the school recognises, the moderation of assessment judgements needs further refinement to ensure that they are as consistent and accurate as possible throughout the school. Most students have good opportunities to achieve relevant external accreditation. For some, externally accredited courses, for example in information communication technology (ICT) and life skills, prepare them well for post school provision. However there is room for more opportunities to be provided, notably for more able students, to have their efforts and achievements externally accredited.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Strong emphasis is placed on the importance of healthy eating and exercise. The school has been awarded the Heartbeat Award for healthy eating and a group of students all achieved weight loss as a result of a healthy eating project. Very good opportunities and resources are available for learners to participate in sport and recreational activities. Physical development and mobility programmes are fully integrated into school and residential activities for all students. More students are participating in sporting activities as a result of extra timetabled activities. The sex education programme encourages healthy relationships which are age appropriate. Students' health and well-being benefit from the extensive support services made available. Risk assessments are thorough and ensure that students' safety needs are properly considered and acted upon. Parents are very positive about the school's safe and secure learning environment.

Levels of student enjoyment are high. Attendance is good but is not monitored sufficiently closely. Students' moral and social development is good. A programme of personal, social and health education makes a valuable contribution in this respect, and class and school rules provide clarity for the students as to what is acceptable and what is not. The behaviour of students is good, given their communication difficulties. Students are commonly found supporting their peers and are helped to recognise others' achievements. They learn about different cultures and gain an appreciation of different religious beliefs, taught in ways that are relevant and meaningful. Students make a positive contribution to the life of the school through the newly formed school council. They are also active in raising funds for charities and visiting local schools to teach sign language. Their future economic well-being is successfully promoted through the development of communication, life and vocational skills. There are good opportunities, where appropriate, for students to gain work experience and to undertake careers education programmes.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is improving and is good overall. The training teachers have received is helping them devise individual programmes for students and to incorporate input from associated professionals such as speech and language therapists. These programmes are being effectively delivered, often by learning support assistants working in close harmony with teachers. Individualised learning is most advanced and effective for students in the multi-sensory support unit but less advanced for students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Planning is thorough, although in some instances the number of learning objectives on individual programmes is considerable. The school is working to improve the quality of targets in students' individual education plans as in some cases these are insufficiently measurable. There is an impressive focus on communication in lessons which is underpinned by signing and the use of visual resources to aid students' understanding and expression of language. Expectations of good behaviour are high and the management of inappropriate behaviour is very good, supported by agreed guidelines. Recent ICT developments are promising but are

yet to make a sizeable contribution in lessons. Teachers receive appropriate guidance and support from senior staff to improve their teaching and there is evidence that this is having an impact.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is appropriately matched to the needs and interests of the students with a suitably prominent emphasis on communication. Those students with the most significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities have increasingly individualised programmes of work. These emanate from careful assessments of their individual needs and are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant to the students. The emphasis on individual programmes of work is partly in response to the school's providing for more students with ASD, some with associated challenging behaviours. This programme of change is being well managed and staff are receiving effective support to individualise the curriculum for students where necessary. This is an ongoing development as the school is working towards external accreditation of its autism provision. Other students are provided with a broader curriculum, covering the National Curriculum subjects, often modified to ensure they are relevant and motivating. In some cases, themes and topics are used across subjects and these helpfully give coherence to the students' learning. There has been an increase in resources for ICT and staff have received some training in using the newly installed interactive whiteboards. However, the impact of this development is not fully apparent in lessons. In Year 10, students begin a transition programme which prepares them effectively for post-16 provision, by including leisure and vocational options where appropriate. As part of this programme, good opportunities are provided for work experience placements for those students whose needs can be met in this way. There is an extensive and well coordinated programme of extra-curricular activities for those students who are resident and for some day students who are able to stay after school. The attendance at these activities testifies to the value students give them.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good and some aspects are outstanding. The staff and students receive excellent support from the variety of multi-professionals engaged with the school. Their support is increasingly integrated into the students' educational day and they are making valuable contributions to the good progress made. The quality of students' support plans is good and they are very well managed. Behaviour support plans are clear and offer excellent guidance to staff. There is effective training for staff in safeguarding matters and there are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the security and safety of the pupils. Staff act as good role models, promote care and respect and have a very good knowledge of individual students. The school's induction arrangements are good and the welcome pack provided for new students and parents contains a useful DVD which explains the work of the school. The transition programme for students which begins in Year 10 includes taster sessions, careers education and guidance and input from other professionals. As a result, students are well prepared for moving on to post-16 placements. Although target setting has improved, in some cases targets are insufficiently measurable. Students are not always given sufficient help in understanding their own priority targets. However, wherever possible they are enabled to make

contributions to their annual reviews, sometimes through the use of visual displays. Reports to parents describe the students' overall progress well, but omit the level the student is working at in different subjects.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leaders and managers set a clear direction based on dignity and respect for the student. Provision is clearly focused on enabling students with a diverse range of complex needs to develop effective communication skills so that they can make appropriate choices and lead more independent lives. The senior management team successfully promotes a culture which is appropriately self-critical and ensures continuous improvements are made.

The management structure has recently been strengthened to improve quality assurance and more effective individualised programming for each student. The school recognises that, although improved, quality assurance arrangements still need to be more rigorous. The lesson observation process is thorough. It is clearly linked to performance management and has been successful in identifying areas for improvement for individual staff and informing overall staff training needs.

Management information systems are also being developed to provide more robust information. However, as yet data are not sufficiently analysed at a whole school level to determine patterns and trends in student achievements. Self-evaluation procedures have improved and now involve all staff. Subject leaders' skills in identifying areas for improvement are also being developed. However, while self-evaluation is sufficiently accurate to inform improvement planning, judgements are not supported well enough by substantive evidence about outcomes for students. Improvement plans are closely monitored to ensure targets for their completion are on track.

Equality of opportunity is promoted well through students' activities. Parents of students from black and other minority ethnic backgrounds are consulted about how their cultural and religious needs can be best met. Policies and procedures are in place to fulfil the requirement of the Race Relations (Amendment Act) (2000) and the Disability Discrimination Act (2005), including a disability equality scheme and action plan.

Staff value the extensive training provided by the school to improve and update their skills and qualifications. They feel well supported and encouraged to perform their roles effectively. Specialist resources, especially those to aid communications and mobility, are good. Significant investment has been made in ICT provision but this was not observed extensively during the inspection.

There are very good links with external providers and agencies. The school has forged good links with other specialist providers to share best practice. There are extensive links with community groups, and volunteers are used to enhance the quality of life experiences for the students.

Governors discharge their duties effectively and are actively involved in evaluating the quality of provision through their direct involvement in the activities of the school. They receive regular reports about particular aspects of school performance and provide suitable challenge and support to the senior management team to ensure standards are maintained.



Value for money is good. Financial management is effective in providing enough resources for staff to perform their roles to a good standard. Budgets are effectively devolved to managers and other staff with particular education provision and support services.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
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	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
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	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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	

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**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Royal School for the Deaf and Communication Disorders (Manchester)

As you know we recently visited your school to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for looking after us and making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed our visit and learned a lot about your school. Thank you for telling us about the things you do and how you think your teachers and other staff are helping you to learn.

What we liked about your school

- The way you enjoy school and want to learn
- The progress you make, especially with your communication, personal and social skills
- The care that all staff take of you
- The way all staff work so well together to help you
- The links the school has with other schools, and people who help you.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Set targets so that your teachers are clear about what they expect you to learn each year.