

# Royal School for The Blind (Liverpool)

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104735
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	308658
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael McDowell

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>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	58
6th form	10
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Leslie Kirsh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J Byrne
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Church Road North Wavertree Liverpool Merseyside L15 6TQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 733 1012
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 733 1703

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. At the same time a qualified residential school inspector inspected the boarding provision.

## Description of the school

The Royal School for the Blind is maintained by an independent charity. It provides day or weekly boarding places for learners with visual impairment and multiple additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All learners have statements of special educational need that recognise their profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most learners are White British but a very small proportion are Asian British or of mixed heritage. English is the home language in almost all cases.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an excellent school that makes a profound and positive difference to the lives of the learners who attend it and to the lives of their families. Achievement is outstanding. Children entering the Foundation Stage make extremely good progress in their learning. Learners, including those from minority ethnic groups or with the most profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress in Years 1 to 11. All extend their ability to communicate; occasionally an individual does this in a spectacularly successful fashion. Progress in mathematics is slightly less marked than in other areas. Students in the post-16 groups build on their earlier successes and make exceptional progress. Learners succeed throughout the school because teaching and learning are outstanding and the environment is carefully tailored to their individual needs. Teachers are very well trained and qualified and have a thorough understanding of learners' needs and of how to get the best from each of them. Lessons are lively and happy occasions. Excellent use is made of all the learners' senses to reinforce learning. Teachers and teaching assistants build very effectively on each small gain that learners make.

Personal development is excellent. Learners of all ages enjoy school and attend well. They love to meet their friends, their teachers and all those who support them. They feel safe. Learners have a healthy lifestyle with nutritious food and they greatly enjoy physical activities. Their attitudes are excellent as is their behaviour. They are very keen to play their part fully in the school community. To this end they make exceptionally good use of their school council. The curriculum is outstanding. It is exceptionally well matched to the needs and aspirations of learners. Learning opportunities are firmly rooted in very well prepared and highly stimulating sensory experiences. The school also provides a broad and exciting range of opportunities to learn outside the classroom and beyond the school day.

Care, support and guidance are excellent. Staff are fully versed in the needs of learners. They are completely committed to promoting learners' health, safety and welfare. Procedures for safeguarding learners are in place. The progress of learners is monitored thoroughly and they are set challenging personal targets. An outstanding feature is the expert help provided to enable learners to develop mobility and the maximum degree of independence. The school listens to the views of its learners and, where possible, acts upon these. The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is good although, in some cases, the records of learners' educational programmes and activities held in boarding units are incomplete.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is rigorous in checking its effectiveness. There is a strong consensus between leadership and staff about what is working well and those areas where improvement can be made. Very productive links exist with other agencies that benefit the education and welfare of learners. Links with parents are very strong. Parents believe this is an excellent school. Governance is much improved and is now excellent. Resources are used very effectively and the school gives outstanding value for money. Improvement since the last inspection is significant and the leadership is excellently placed to develop the school further.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

The post-16 provision is exceptionally effective. Through excellent teaching, guidance and support it enables students to become as independent as possible. Students embrace the

opportunity to move out into the community and they are very well prepared for their next step beyond school. The post-16 students make excellent progress in their accredited courses. They complete the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) 'Towards Independence' and 'Transition Challenge' units very successfully. The post-16 provision is led and managed exceptionally well.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Provision for children under five is outstanding. Their needs are carefully analysed and the best approach is found to develop their communication, personal and social skills. From the time they enter the Foundation Stage children begin, very rapidly, to respond to the stimulating activities carefully planned for them by their teachers. They develop pre-lingual communication skills and learn to use their hearing, and their senses of touch, smell and taste to join in activities and explore the world around them. They become increasingly sociable and ready to form relationships. By the time they enter Year 1 they have made exceptional progress. Teaching is first-rate and makes use of the full range of each child's senses to help her or him to move on. Children are cared for extremely well and the support and guidance given to children and their families is exceptional. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 8**

Boarding provision supports, equally well, the welfare of learners who board for four nights each week and those who do so occasionally as part of a respite programme. The quality of provision has improved significantly since the last inspection of boarding provision a year ago. It meets or exceeds all of the National Minimum Standards for residential care. It contributes well to all areas essential to learners' well-being in childhood and later life. The boarding provision also supports the education of learners very well. In a few areas improvements are needed. In one boarding unit the record of medication occasionally lacks clarity. The proportion of care staff with NVQ Level 3 remains just below the threshold required and in some cases the records held by the residential units about learners' educational activities are incomplete. However, overall, collaboration between the school and the boarding units is good and is effective in ensuring continuity of care for learners. A full report on the boarding provision can be seen at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports>.

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

- Improve learners' achievement in mathematics.
- Ensure that full records of learners' educational programmes and activities are held in each boarding unit.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Although attainment remains very much below average, from Year 1 to Year 11 all pupils and students thrive and achieve exceptionally well, including the most able and those with the most profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They make exceptionally good gains in English,

science, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education. The achievement of a few individuals who have overcome communication, literacy and language difficulties, is remarkable. In comparison, progress in mathematics is slightly slower than in English and science. This is chiefly because young people with visual impairment have difficulty in those areas of learning connected with 'shape and space'. However, more could be done to help overcome these difficulties.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Learners of all ages are happy to tell visitors that they enjoy school very much. Their good attendance confirms this. They say that they feel very safe at school and they like and trust their teachers and all the adults who care for and support them. Those who are able to do so understand the importance of eating sensibly and all enjoy the healthy meals provided. They make full use of the good opportunities for swimming and exercise. Learners' personal qualities, including their behaviour, are excellent. They are confident and friendly. Over time they learn to understand their own feelings and consider the needs and feelings of others. They are outward looking; they help each other and people in the broader community. For example, they have enjoyed great success as advisers to organisers of a local heritage project on the needs and expectations of the visually impaired and wheelchair users. They are keen to preserve the environment and have gained a bronze eco-award for recycling work. The school council illustrates the best qualities of learners. It raises and administers funds, supports national charities and passes on practical suggestions in order to improve the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are extremely good. Learners respond very well to the moments in assemblies set aside for quiet thinking and for prayer, and gain in abundance from the visits of artists and musicians to the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Learners thrive in response to excellent teaching. Teachers have additional qualifications in meeting the needs of learners with multiple disabilities and visual impairment. Because of this and their wealth of practical experience they have a thorough understanding of the needs of their pupils and of how to get the best from those with the most profound difficulties. They plan lessons generally that make the most effective use of learners' senses and have developed a broad range of resources to stimulate learning. They are alert to learners' potential strengths and give them time to respond so that no evidence of their progress, however slight, is missed. Monitoring of achievements is thorough. Teachers and teaching assistants never fail to praise the efforts of learners and encourage them to move on further. Very effective use is made of ICT to extend learning. Learners are always encouraged to be as independent as possible. Behaviour is managed extremely effectively. Teaching of older learners takes full account of their age and of their interests and there is a strong practical element to learning activities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school provides a very rich and supportive educational environment that is at the heart of pupils' success. Those in the early years, and older pupils with the most profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are given very stimulating sensory experiences that extend their social and communication skills. The curriculum is extended extremely well both academically and socially by visits to shops and cafes in the local area and to concerts, theatres and heritage exhibits. Visitors to the school have included artists, a symphony orchestra and a jazz band. The school properly emphasises areas of learning that are crucial to its learners, for example, mobility. Provision for this is superb. The curriculum for the post-16 groups emphasises the development of independence and students are very well prepared for their next step. Work-related learning and work experience is offered successfully to those learners who can cope with this.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Comprehensive policies are in place to ensure that learners are not exposed to risk or danger. Child protection arrangements are thorough. Learners' progress is monitored closely and their development is carefully tracked. The school buildings have been imaginatively and carefully developed to provide learners with a safe environment through which they may move with confidence. The use of many different surfaces on corridor floors and of objects that can be touched or felt to signify the entrances to rooms is excellent. Learners make very good use of these exemplary arrangements in developing their spatial awareness and their independent movement. The safe and supportive environment of the school greatly helps learners to meet their challenging personal targets. They are encouraged to make their voices heard and their ideas and suggestions are listened to respectfully and acted upon. Learners are very well supported as they move on from the school. Parents have a very high opinion of the school and believe that it works with them closely.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The leadership has very clear educational and operational priorities and a very good record of constant improvement. The views of parents are sought and taken into account. Many aspects of the school's performance, including the achievement of learners, the quality of teaching and the curriculum, have been improved very well since the last inspection. The school staff are united with the leadership in their determination to ensure that learners get the best possible chance to attain their potential. Those in leadership roles effectively develop their subjects ensuring that what is taught is well matched to the needs of learners. Management is excellent. The school is inclusive and strongly promotes all learners' equality of opportunity. It strives to ensure that learners are socially included in the life of the local community. The school has extremely effective relationships with other agencies who act to ensure the welfare of learners.

Governance is excellent and the governors maintain rigorous oversight of the school. They play their part in setting achievement targets and in holding the school to account.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
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	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<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>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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**

Inspection of Royal School for the Blind, Liverpool, Merseyside, L15 6TQ

Thank you very much for helping us when we visited to inspect your school.

You were very polite when you talked with us. We really enjoyed seeing you in your lessons, at breaks and when we joined you at lunchtime. We were really pleased that you let us join your school council meeting.

You shared with us that you like school very much and that it gives you the chance to do lots of things you enjoy. You said that you feel safe at school and that you trust the adults who work with you. You know a lot about healthy eating and taking enough exercise. You think of others and try to help whenever you can.

We found out that your school is excellent. It helps you to achieve as much as you can by giving you excellent teaching, care, support and guidance. It provides you with an excellent curriculum that meets your needs. It is led and managed extremely well. All of this has helped you to become the thoughtful, generous and hard working girls and boys that you are.

In order to improve your school further we have asked your headteacher to:

- help you achieve more in mathematics
- make sure that records held by each boarding unit about what you are doing in school are as full as they should be.

Thank you once again for making our visit so enjoyable.