

# Royal School for The Deaf (Derby)

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113044
<b>Local Authority</b>	City of Derby LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311086
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Derby

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>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	90
6th form	27
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The proprietor Mr Austin Reeves
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Cheryl Ford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 March 2005
<b>School address</b>	Ashbourne Road Derby Derbyshire DE22 3BH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01332 362512
<b>Fax number</b>	01322 299708

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<b>Age group</b>	3–19
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors. At the same time, an inspection of the residential provision was undertaken by a social care inspector from Ofsted. Although a separate report for this will be available from the Ofsted website under 'care in residential special schools', inspectors shared evidence during the inspection and judgements about boarding in this report take into account the findings of the social care inspection.

## Description of the school

Royal School for the Deaf Derby (RSDD) is a large, long-established day and residential special school which takes pupils from all over the UK. The post-16 department is a relatively new venture and has been running for three years.

All the pupils are deaf and have speech, language and communication difficulties. Pupils have access to English and British sign language and also to a whole range of support services which includes, speech and language therapy, audiology and other medical provision to support their needs. Many pupils have additional needs. These include visual, physical, and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties; some have mental health needs. Pupils enter the school with attainment levels much lower than expected for their age, especially with regard to their language and literacy skills. Most pupils are White British, although a small number are from a range of minority ethnic groups.

The school has a number of awards and in 2007 gained Healthy School Status, and Investors in People award. It has Activemark Gold and Health Promoting School awards also. The school is applying for specialist school status in information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics.

## 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 school that has much to celebrate. Royal School for the Deaf Derby (RSDD) is a good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. It is a school which knows where it is going and which has gone from strength to strength. Staff pull together towards a common goal – to do their utmost for pupils. The school's 'have a go' culture certainly rubs off on the pupils who try exceptionally hard with their work. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are high on the agenda in the school's pursuit of excellence and the school works exceptionally well with parents and other agencies to achieve its aims well.

Morale is high and the headteacher and senior team lead and manage well. They have demonstrated through their actions that they are well placed to improve the school further. Parents are effusive about the school. Parental views of the quality of the school's provision are typified by one parent's comment '...her future is bright. RSDD has not only given her excellent teaching in the right environment, it has helped her to mature into a confident, outgoing young person to whom the future is wide open'.

Improvement has been good over the last few years because the senior team reflects well on what it needs to do to improve and strives hard to make its provision better. It has clear plans to move forward. Sometimes, though, the way it states how it will know it has succeeded in securing improvement is not linked well enough to a desired impact on its pupils' achievement. The school's successful review of its communication policy now means that it ensures that its approach is child led, and through its signing and speaking community, it demonstrates that it values equally the languages and cultures of both deaf and hearing people.

The senior team is ambitious for its pupils and provides a good curriculum. It has introduced award bearing courses in Key Stage 4 that are far more 'practical' and where there is less emphasis on literacy. As a result, a half of the pupils in Year 11 last summer gained five good grades in GCSE – a really good achievement for these pupils. Overall, achievement is good throughout the school. There are many areas where pupils make good and sometimes exceptional progress. Nevertheless, for the majority, their ability to read and write correctly is still a major hurdle and the school has rightly identified it needs to do more to help them improve. While some teachers expect a lot, and are at great pains to point out to pupils where they need to be more accurate in their reading and writing, this is not consistent across the school. The school collects a great deal of information about pupils' learning and progress and uses this to set targets at an individual level. However, it does not put the information together in a systematic way so that trends and patterns in achievement can be determined over time.

Its excellent links with the community enable it to provide a curriculum that goes well beyond its physical boundary and enables its post-16 students to be included most effectively in the local college and community life. It does a great deal to support its students for the future and courses are closely tailored to students' needs. Through its links with support agencies, such as for mental health, the school has a major impact on pupils' health and well-being. Pupils' outstanding personal development is the result of the school's exceptional pastoral care and support, in education and residence, as well as a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE).

The school's push on pupils taking responsibility for their own learning means that the youngest pupils' ability to say what they must do to improve is impressive. Pupils' self-assessment is increasingly evident as this is being developed throughout the school.

The teaching is good and occasionally exceptional. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Staff are particularly skilled in teaching pupils who are deaf. They are also clear about what constitutes good teaching because they receive good guidance and support from senior staff.

### **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

#### **Grade: 2**

Students are successful in a wide variety of accredited courses and achieve well. For example, they gain awards for Key Skills and Life Skills through Application of Number, Adult Literacy and Numeracy, BTEC First Diploma Art and Media Studies, Foundation Art, GCSEs and A levels. Students also pursue the Duke of Edinburgh Silver and Gold Awards. The quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding teaching seen during the inspection. There is excellent guidance and support for students when they choose curriculum options and when implementing independence programmes. Achievement in personal development is impressive. This is because the outstanding curriculum provides so many meaningful occasions for students to develop self-confidence and social skills, with a clear focus on preparing them for their future lives. Post-16 students' 'passport to leisure' encourages and allows them to participate more in sporting activities in their free time. Students and parents comment positively on the independence and lifeskills programme, such as organising a trip to Scotland and participation in driving instruction. The sixth form is well led and managed. The provision is constantly reviewed to ensure that each student's needs are properly met. Accommodation is excellent and there is high quality speech and language therapy and audiology back-up provided by the school. Students are fully included with their hearing peers at college.

### **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

#### **Grade: 2**

The youngest children in the school love coming to school and join in their lessons with enthusiasm. They settle quickly, grow in confidence and achieve well. Staff are very well tuned into their needs and because of this, progress in communication and early reading and writing skills and in children's personal development, is outstanding. Excellent team work between the speech and language therapist, the audiology department and Foundation Stage staff ensures pupils' individual communication needs are met very well. In all other areas of learning, children's achievements are at least good. However, the school rightly recognises the need to extend children's learning through their outdoor environment. Currently, outdoor facilities are limited and opportunities are lost for exploiting children's knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development because of this. Good teaching fosters children's independence and encourages them to have a go. Very good records and observational notes are kept as to how children are doing.

The coordinator draws well on other early years specialists to plan for the new requirements next year. Careful planning and review of activities ensure children cover all the areas of learning they should. However, planning does not always show precisely what the children will learn through an activity.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The joint inspection judges the school's residential provision as good; it exceeds the outcomes expected for its residents. Pupils' enjoyment of residential life is outstanding. A small number of recommendations will appear in the social care report. These are made in relation to the way the provision keeps records and in its safeguarding procedures, which are satisfactory overall.

Handover arrangements at the start and end of the day are effectively managed and alert staff to any difficulties or successes that may affect pupils' attitudes. Relationships between students and staff are excellent and pupils indicate that they are comfortable to turn to adults if they need help. A 'Residence Council' has been established to ensure resident pupils and students have a 'voice', which is heard and acted upon. Well established routines ensure that pupils are well cared for, are happy and that the residential provision makes a good contribution to their communication skills, school work and personal development. They consider they are treated with dignity and feel safe. Staff are fully involved in pupils' annual reviews, care plans and decisions concerning programmes after school. Homework clubs and extended day activities are an important aspect of residential life and appreciated by pupils and students. Provision is well led and managed and contributes significantly to the positive ethos of the school.

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

- Ensure that information about pupils' learning and progress is systematically recorded, tracked and analysed so that trends and patterns in the achievement (for individuals and groups) can be identified and any issues responded to.
- Improve pupils' reading skills and ensure that support for literacy is provided consistently in all lessons.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils achieve well throughout the school and so do students in the post-16 department. Although, overall, they reach standards that are much lower than expected for their age, some individual pupils attain close to the expectations for their age.

Progress through the school is good because of the attention given to improving pupils' skills in British sign language and to other aspects of their communication. A significant achievement for Year 11 pupils last summer was that just over half of them gained five A\* - C grades in GCSE courses. They did particularly well in ICT where most gained the equivalent of two GCCE passes at C grade or better in the Diploma in Digital Applications.

The school has raised its sights and is aiming higher. It exceeded its targets last year and now has a more rigorous system of setting them, which is more closely linked to the areas that pupils need most to improve in. Pupils' literacy levels often remain low and are a barrier to more accelerated progress and higher attainment. Reading is a particular difficulty. However, the school has identified this as an area for urgent improvement.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils enjoy school immensely and their attitudes are overwhelmingly positive. Pupils are told 'never say can't' and they follow this to the letter. Relationships are excellent. Pupils and students build up confidence and self-esteem as they progress through school and leave school at 18 or 19 extremely well prepared personally and socially. Behaviour is good overall and excellent in post-16. Attendance is good. Pupils use their initiative very well; for instance, through setting up a Pupil Welfare Committee to seek out the views of parents. Older pupils and students support younger pupils effectively through the numerous opportunities they are given.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Self-reflection and understanding about their own needs and deaf culture lie at the heart of the school's work. Multicultural understanding is excellent. Numerous opportunities, such as exchange programmes with a school for the deaf in Norway and a post-16 email link with a school in Japan, promote this. The pupils very successfully develop a healthy life style and know exceptionally well how to keep safe. Provision for physical activities is excellent and take up is high. Pupils' participation in work experience, enterprise week and sports leadership programmes enhances their confidence and personal development particularly well. Pupils do a great deal for their school and local community.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils say lessons are fun and staff work hard to make learning interesting. In most lessons, pupils concentrate extremely well and try really hard to get things right. Teachers plan their lessons well, thinking carefully about their pupils' differing needs and abilities. They are now making more use of ICT to support their teaching and pupils' learning, as a result of the school's focus on ensuring this is used well in all subjects. Education assistants make a valuable contribution to the practical part of lessons but they are sometimes under-used at the start and end of lessons.

Some good examples of staff helping pupils address their weaknesses in writing, especially with regard to grammatical structure, were noted in some lessons. However, this is not consistent practice in all subjects taught and is a missed opportunity to help pupils with their literacy skills.

Teaching in post-16 is very finely tuned to students' needs and the help they get in their study support sessions is exceptional well judged.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

These are good in the main school and outstanding in post-16. Extended day activities, homework support and extra-curricular activities are extremely wide-ranging. The main weakness of this area is that support for pupils' reading and writing is not fully embedded across the curriculum.

The National Curriculum is supplemented well by deaf studies and British sign language programmes for which pupils receive accreditation. Additional opportunities, such as the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, support pupils' personal development very well. The pupils benefit from a revised programme of higher level courses in Key Stage 4 as well as receiving a good range of work related learning opportunities. The range of courses and options in post-16 is extensive and exceptionally finely tuned to students' needs and aspirations. Students are provided with a very firm foundation which builds their personal and learning skills through the main school and prepares them for college and community courses where they are extremely well included.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Care, guidance and support are good in school and outstanding at post-16. The needs of all pupils and students are well known and catered for. Staff have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing and what they need to do next. This information is regularly shared with parents who value the home-school books and detailed reports they receive.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Children in public care are monitored rigorously to ensure they are well cared for and fully supported. Risk assessments are thorough and detailed.

Speech and language therapists and audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, autistic team and cochlear implant teams ensure that pupils' needs associated with their deafness are well met. Support from the Telemental Health Service, counsellors, the Pupil Support Unit (PSU), and the school nurse, all provide significant support for pupils who are having any personal difficulties.

Assessment, the tracking of progress and the quality of feedback to students at post-16 is particularly good. Staff use a very effective visual presentation which students easily understand, see where they are and how to progress to the next step. Consequently, they reach and often exceed their targets. Assessment is good in the main school. Although the school collects a lots of data about pupils' attainments, it does not sufficiently track pupils' progress, especially that of different groups.



## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The headteacher and senior leadership team work well together to successfully create a climate for learning that is child centred, and that challenges pupils to learn and to be part of both a deaf and hearing community. As a result of all of this, everyone has high aspirations for pupils and staff have high expectations of themselves.

Leadership structures, roles and responsibilities have all been revised since the last inspection. This has ensured more effective working across departments and improved assessment. However, the school is not yet using all the data to best effect. Nonetheless, the school does reflect carefully on what it needs to do improve. The work of middle managers has developed well, and particularly in relation to how different parts of the school work together to ensure pupils move smoothly between them. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and have done much to address budgetary and finance issues. However, they know that they have not always kept a sufficiently close eye on the curriculum or on pupils' achievement, and this is being addressed by the new chair of the committee.

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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?	2	2
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	2	
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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	2

### 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	2	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	2	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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>	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Royal School for the Deaf, Ashbourne Road, Derby DE22 3BH

What a good school you have! You are right to be very proud of it and so are your parents, who said many wonderful things about the school. I hope you enjoy the video of this letter, which is going to be signed to you. A special thanks to all of you who met with inspectors during the inspection.

You are a credit to RSDD and all the staff help you mature and grow into very confident young adults. Those of you in the post-16 department show through your work, actions, behaviour and interactions with others that you are excellently prepared for the next steps either at college or in employment.

Your school works exceptionally hard with many others outside the school, such as your parents, employers, colleges and medical staff, to ensure you get the right help. Staff give you a great deal of help and also work exceptionally hard.

You make good progress because you are well taught and are provided with work that closely matches your needs and abilities. Another reason is because YOU try your hardest because you want to do well. The school's 'can do' approach really rubs off on you. Some of you do particularly well in Key Stage 4 to get A\* - C grades at GCSE; the new courses the school has chosen for you are particularly well tailored. This is helping you because the emphasis is often on practical skills with less of a focus on reading and writing.

Of course, the main reason why all this happens is because of Mrs Ford's good leadership of the school and the strong support she gets from the senior team. They are all ambitious for you and are working hard to improve the school.

We have asked the senior staff to do two things to make it even better. Firstly, they are going to keep a close eye on the progress you make, so that they can check that all of you are doing equally well and give help to any of you that need it. Secondly, many of you struggle with reading, although you try hard. We want the school to do more to help you improve this so your literacy skills can be even better.

Best wishes and good luck.

George Derby

Lead inspector