

RNIB Rushton School and Children's Home

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122155
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	340095
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	6–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Appropriate authority	The proprietor Dr Neil Harris
Headteacher	Andrew Moran
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2007
School address	Wheelwright Lane Ash Green Coventry
Telephone number	0247 6369500
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Age group	6–19
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Boarding provision	RNIB Rushton Children's Home
Social care Unique Reference Number	SCO30951
Social care inspector	Christy Wannop

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, visited the Children's Home, looked at policies and pupils' work and analysed the three parental/carers questionnaires that were returned. The inspection looked in detail at the following:

how well pupils are doing in their learning

- how well teaching is meeting the needs of all pupils and whether teaching is getting better
- whether pupils, and students in the sixth form, are learning what is right for them
- how effective leaders and governors are in raising achievement.

Information about the school

Rushton School and Children's Home is a residential special school owned by the Royal National Institute of the Blind. Pupils attend from local authorities throughout the country. Currently, 14 local authorities send pupils to the school. The residential facility caters for 19 pupils and there are 16 at present, most boarding for 52 weeks each year. An inspection of the boarding provision was undertaken by a social care inspector. Six pupils are day pupils. At present, there are no early years children. Most of the pupils are of White British origin. All have a statement of special educational needs for severe and complex difficulties and/or disabilities, which include vision impairment. The school is nearing the end of a substantial building programme, which will realise new custom-designed school and residential buildings that can cater for 60 pupils. Pupils and staff will move into the new accommodation beginning in September 2010. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Rushton School is an effective and welcoming school. Staff have unified behind the headteacher and senior leaders have worked hard to improve the school. As a consequence, pupils make good progress against their targets for learning and in developing their communication and personal and social skills; this is better than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are cared for and nurtured outstandingly well. When they leave the sixth form they are well prepared to live as independent a life as is possible.

The severity of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities means that they attain at levels well below those expected for their age. They make good progress against their targets for learning in lessons. Teaching is mostly good and pupils contribute to their good progress by making a good effort to attend to their tasks. They improve their ability to communicate in the best way they can, including using a tactile reading system, or picture exchanges, signs and symbols as well as speech. Improving their ability to communicate helps in their learning and also in their personal and social development because they are able to make more refined choices, including showing what they like and dislike.

Teaching has improved, in part because leaders have ensured that planning is now consistent over all the classes. In each lesson individual targets for learning are identified for each pupil. This makes learning relevant and ensures that all pupils, irrespective of the severity or complexity of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, make equivalently good progress against their targets. In a small number of lessons planning is compromised because teachers do not have the appropriate resources to spur on learning. In these lessons teaching is less effective, and learning more difficult due to a lack of sufficient technological resources such as low-level magnifying aids, calculators with large buttons and high technology electronic devices, such as those with touch-screen technology and personal electronic tablets. Teaching assistants are generous in number, well trained and in most lessons are deployed very well. They make a significant contribution to making the teaching teams as effective as they are. The small number of pupils in each lesson means that staff know their pupils very well, including what they can and cannot do. Nevertheless, across the subjects the small steps pupils make in their progress are not recorded well enough. This makes it difficult to recognise how well each pupil is doing over the period of a term or a year, and for leaders to judge the overall quality of pupils' progress either against their own targets or emerging national data.

The school is a safe, happy and joyous place. Within the constraints of their difficulties pupils express themselves well as growing young people and day-to-day show emotions

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such as happiness, trust and friendship, especially with the adults who are closest to them. As their communication skills grow they gain a better understanding of the effect of their actions and learn to behave well. They gain good guidance on what is acceptable behaviour and what is not from the consistent way in which all staff deal with them and from this they learn what is right and what is wrong.

Senior leaders know the school well, including knowing that the actions they have taken, for example in improving teaching and learning, have produced good results. Because of this the capacity for sustaining improvement is good. Governors are taking an increasing role in holding leaders to account, but they need to be more involved in evaluating all aspects of the provision before they can take a full part in developing the school. The promotion of equal opportunity is a visible focus of the school. All pupils gain the specialist help they require. The close link between the staff of the Children's Home and the school ensures that any specific advice or programme developed for pupils is consistently applied in both settings. Planning for community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to find out about international communities through the emerging partnership programme. However, overall partnerships with other schools and relevant agencies are not making a sufficient contribution to extending and enriching pupils' learning experiences. After a period of stable and effective leadership, staff morale is high. Staff, and the leaders, are rightly excited about the opportunities afforded them to continue to improve the school when they move into their impressive new buildings.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by:
 - making more effective use of assessment information in recording and reporting progress
 - extending and enriching pupils' learning experiences through developing relevant partnerships
 - increasing the availability of low technology and high technology aids in supporting teaching and learning.
- Ensure that governors are more effective in driving continued improvement by taking an increased role in planning for improvement and in understanding progress data.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In lessons pupils generally make good progress. Steps in their learning can be very small. Nevertheless, that learning occurs is clear from the good way pupils attend to their tasks and the good efforts they make to please the adults in their teaching teams. An important contributor to their good progress is the outstanding relationships they develop with adult staff. They are comfortable around them and are pleased to see them when they join their classes in the morning and when they return to their classes

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after lunch. The expert way in which teachers and their assistants use different strategies for communicating with pupils not only helps them in their learning, but allows staff to have fun with them and to quickly and routinely celebrate their successes. As a consequence, pupils develop a good awareness of appropriate moral and social behaviour, although because of the complexity of their special educational needs and/or disabilities they are not always able to show this. Through the workings of the school council they become aware of issues to do with the school community. They gain knowledge of different cultures through finding out and contributing to charitable causes and through regular theme days. The food that is prepared for them gives very good guidance on a healthy diet and the work of the physiotherapist reinforces the notion that it is good to be as active as possible. Pupils attend well and the outstandingly safe environment and considerate staff make a significant contribution to their good progress toward becoming as independent as is possible.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and better than was the case at the last inspection. In the good lessons careful planning ensures that tasks match well with pupils' specific emotional and physical, but especially their sensory needs. The teaching team's expert use of augmentative approaches to communication and the availability of appropriate resources means that for most pupils learning proceeds over the full duration of lessons. In a few of the lessons this is not so. The expectations of the teaching team are not always high enough to drive learning and imprecise planning leads to lesson tasks that do not match well enough with pupils' learning needs and teaching that is not supported by sufficient appropriate resources. In these lessons pupils find it hard to attend well and quickly turn away from their learning.

The curriculum successfully focuses on developing independence. The primary thrust is on improving pupils' ability to communicate as a first step to promoting learning and the development of personal and social skills. The curriculum meets national requirements and is developed around a scheme that allows the small steps pupils make in their learning to be recognised and built upon. Any additional requirements for pupils, for example those required by their statements of special educational needs are met in full. Visits to local facilities are a regular feature. These give pupils frequent opportunities to practise their emerging communication skills and to gain in self-confidence, both of which contribute to their good progress. The impact on learning of the school's partnership with other establishments requires further development. However, the link between the school and the Children's Home makes a significant contribution to the good progress pupils make in their learning and in their journey toward independence. The communication passports provide outstanding evidence of the way in which staff of the school and children's home work cooperatively to the benefit of pupils.

The arrangements to secure pupils' safety and well-being are rigorous. At the very heart of these arrangements is the outstanding relationships staff have with the pupils. In a caring, supportive and protective environment pupils' sensory, physical, medical and emotional needs are met exceptionally well. Personnel from the pupils' local authorities who visit the school to attend annual reviews confirm their satisfaction with the high level of care and support routinely gained by pupils. Transition arrangements from school to Children's Home are very good as are those between the school and the next destinations.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have a clear ambition to provide outstanding provision for their pupils. They know the school's strengths and weakness and have detailed information on the extent to which their actions have already improved the overall quality of the provision. Since the last inspection many new procedures have been embedded, which are beginning to show reward. For example, those to do with the performance management of staff and the associated training programme are helping meet the very wide range of pupils' learning and other needs by extending the collective skill base of staff. The quality of teaching and learning is being driven up by the introduction of good monitoring and evaluating procedures. At the same time, senior leaders have been contributing advice and guidance on the extensive building programme, which will realise school and boarding accommodation for three times as many pupils as are currently at school. Leaders have also successfully adapted the school's good safeguarding procedures to meet the additional demands of being at the centre of a building site. Staff are unified behind their leaders and see this as an exciting time. Leaders show good capacity to sustain the improvement shown since the last inspection. Governors realise that they need to take a greater role in supporting leaders in making their vision of outstanding provision reality. They are aware of the need to challenge leaders more, to know how assessment information can help judge the effectiveness of the school and the importance of extending and enriching pupils' learning experiences through partnerships.

There are good plans in place to engage with a greater number of community groups once the building project has been completed. The promotion of equal opportunity is fundamental to the work of the school. This is seen, especially, through the easy way in which staff use augmentative communication strategies in interacting with pupils. But the greatest contribution to ensuring that all pupils gain all that is possible from the school is the outstanding way in which staff care for, support and even worry about their pupils. They are so committed that they are dismayed if they realise that there is something more they could be doing to help pupils in their learning or in their development as young people.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Provision and leadership in the sixth form are good because students are encouraged and guided toward achieving realistic but challenging targets. They are being well prepared to take as full and active a role as is reasonably possible in preparation for the move to their future placements.

Overall, teaching is good. Students are supported by a well-qualified and considerate teaching team each of whom understands their needs and responds quickly and effectively to them. Lessons are well planned and are matched well to the needs of each student. Teaching is underpinned by sensory experiences, which make learning relevant. Progress against lesson targets is judged at the end of every lesson and learning benefits from this because students help in making the judgements. Objects of reference and other support strategies, including signing, use of a tactile reading system and switches, are used well in ensuring that all students gain open access to a broad and relevant curriculum. However, opportunities to support learning through the use of computer technologies that magnify, add colour, movement and sound are missed because of the absence of appropriate equipment. Regular visits to many local facilities provide beneficial opportunities for students to socialise and gain in confidence when they deal with 'new' adults in 'new' places. Learning is accredited through an appropriate national scheme and external moderation confirms the good progress students make. Students receive outstanding support and guidance especially over the time of transition to their next placement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good and the national minimum standards were met. A full report on this provision is available on application to Ofsted.

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National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- All national minimum standards are met.

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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Views of parents and carers

The small number of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were pleased that their children enjoyed school. They liked the way the school was meeting their children's needs, that they were safe there, and that their children were making good progress. They were appreciative of the good leadership and the way in which leaders responded to their suggestions and concerns. The results of the school's annual survey of parents and carers for last year, to which almost all parents and carers responded, confirmed the judgements of the smaller number who returned responses to the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rushton School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received three completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 22 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	2	67	0	0	1	33	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	67	0	0	1	33	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	67	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rushton School, Ash Green, Coventry, CV7 9RA

It was lovely for me and my colleague to meet and talk with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We found your school to be a good school. We especially liked the:

- outstanding way the school looks after you so that you feel safe and comfortable and the way you make friends with your adults
- good progress you make in your learning and toward becoming as independent as you can be
- good way in which you are being taught and the good effort you make in lessons to do your best
- good way in which the school staff and the children's home staff work together so that you learn more
- good way the school's leaders are working hard to make it a better place for you to learn and to grow up.

There are a few things I have asked to be made even better. I have asked your leaders to do a few things. To take greater care when they record how well you are doing in your learning and to make sure that teachers have the right pieces of equipment to help you learn. I have also asked them to join with other places so that you have different experiences when you are learning. Finally, I have asked governors to work harder at ensuring your leaders are doing the right things to continue to improve your school. You can help too, by continuing to behave as well as you can and by always making your best effort when you are learning.

I am as excited as are your adults about your new building. I think that you are going to enjoy it very much. Thank you again for being so welcoming and I will always have pleasant memories of my time with you.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector

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