

**The Royal Blind School
Edinburgh
15 February 2006**

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1. Background

The Royal Blind School was inspected in September 2005 as part of a national sample for pupils with additional support needs. The inspection was part of a programme of integrated inspections of residential schools by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. It was one of the twice-yearly inspections which are undertaken by the Care Commission.

The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages. It evaluated approaches to ensuring pupils' care and protection, the environment for care and learning, educational provision and support for pupils. The inspection paid close attention to the quality of leadership and the capacity of the service to improve.

Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors gave particular attention to selected national care standards and quality indicators. HM Inspectors observed learning and teaching and examined pupils' work. Along with Care Commission Officers, they analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, a few pupils and all staff. They interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, two groups of parents and staff. Members of the inspection team also met a representative of the Board of Governors. They provided oral feedback to the school's senior management and members of the Board of Governors on the standards and quality of the work of the school.

The Royal Blind School is situated in Edinburgh. It operates on two sites situated about two miles apart, namely Craigmillar Park campus and Canaan Lane campus. The school also has a nursery based at Canaan Lane which was not inspected at this time. The Royal Blind School is an independent, grant-aided, charity based organisation that is overseen by a Board of Governors. It provides day education for 34 pupils and education and residential care for 79 pupils. All pupils have a significant degree of visual impairment and many have other additional support needs. Those pupils requiring significant additional support are educated and cared for at Canaan Lane. Care is provided at Canaan Lane on a 52-week basis if required. Seventy primary and secondary pupils attended the Craigmillar Park campus and 43 primary and secondary pupils attended the Canaan Lane campus. Almost all pupils had a Record of Needs. Twenty Scottish and eight English local authorities along with Northern Ireland and some countries overseas had placed pupils in the school.

2. Key strengths

Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The high quality of learning and teaching across the school.
- Staff knowledge and expertise in very effectively addressing the individual needs of pupils.
- Excellent support for pupils in respect of mobility training.

- The high expectations of pupils and staff in respect of pupils' achievements and behaviour.
- Pupils who were confident and actively involved in their own learning.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils, staff and placing authorities?

Parents, carers and staff were very positive about most aspects of the school. They all felt welcome in the school and thought the school had a good reputation in the community. Parents and carers felt their children received the support and help they needed and that staff showed concern for the care and wellbeing of their children. However, parents who met with the inspection team said that they would like more information about the facilities available in the school following their child's admission. Some parents wished better information about their child's learning targets. Almost all pupils were very positive about most aspects of the school. They felt safe and well looked after in the school and thought care staff and their teachers knew them well. Pupils said teachers and care staff listened to what they said and told them when they had done something well. Residential pupils commented that there were lots of interesting activities and clubs to attend in the evening. Staff across the school felt they set high standards for pupils' achievements. They thought pupils were enthusiastic about their learning and the standard of behaviour was high. However, some staff expressed concern about the effectiveness of communication, and their involvement in decision making and felt that senior managers did not always operate sufficiently well as a team. They also conveyed their anxieties regarding the future of the school. Most education authorities who placed pupils in the school were positive about the very specialised work of the school.

Further details about what most pleased parents and carers, staff and pupils, and what they would most like to see improved, can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

4. How well are pupils supported?

Care and protection

The quality of care and protection was good. Young people were well supported by all staff who were very responsive to their individual needs. Care was provided in a warm and sensitive manner and pupils were observed to be relaxed and comfortable when they interacted with staff. The school had an appropriate child protection policy in place and the recently appointed child protection coordinator had met with residential staff to provide additional guidance. However, not all staff had been trained in child protection procedures and relevant legislation. Very good arrangements were in place for risk assessments, including visits outwith the school. The school had an effective anti-bullying policy. Children and young people had access to relevant helpline numbers, which were also available in Braille. Staff promoted positive behaviour through appropriate use of praise and rewards. Sanctions used were effectively individualised and appropriately recorded. All care staff received relevant training in de-escalating challenging behaviour and there had been no recent incidents of restraint in the school or residential units. The school very effectively implemented its no-smoking policy and ensured pupils' safety when they used the internet. However, the school had not yet developed a procedure for missing persons nor

provided relevant staff training to deal with such incidents. The school did not have a policy on the control of infection.

Support arrangements, including arriving for the first time and support for pupils' communication

Children stated that they felt welcome and happy when they arrived for the first time at school. They had benefited from visiting the school including, where appropriate, the residential units prior to admission. The school had recently reviewed the admissions procedure and intended to continue to monitor its implementation. Effective systems were in place in residences to support pupils' means of communication, including translation and interpretation services. Care staff were knowledgeable about resources available to develop communication skills. Care and education staff had started to improve their approaches to joint planning to ensure a more holistic approach to meeting pupils' care and educational needs. The school's information booklets for pupils did not include information on bullying and discrimination, insurance of personal belongings, and guidance on the outcome of being in possession of unauthorised substances. An information pack for parents was under development.

Meeting pupils' needs

Almost all pupils across both campuses were working well to achieve learning targets set within individualised educational programmes (IEPs). In almost all cases, these were effectively focused on pupils' needs and regularly reviewed. However, pupils' learning targets were not yet incorporated into pupils' care plans. In Craigmillar Park, senior pupils contributed to setting their own learning targets and often worked independently. A few targets for primary pupils in Craigmillar Park lacked clarity. Staff matched tasks and activities very well to meet pupils' individual needs. High levels of team work across both campuses were facilitated through regular multi-disciplinary meetings. Nursery nurses and support staff across the school knew pupils well and provided well-judged interventions which encouraged maximum independence from pupils. Therapy staff worked very closely with education and care staff through providing very good support and guidance to staff, pupils and parents. Medical needs were effectively addressed by nursing staff. Mobility training was excellent across the school. The three mobility officers worked in partnership with staff to ensure consistency in approach throughout the school. This collaborative working was extended to reinforce skills and techniques with parents, mobility officers in home areas and staff in link placements. Pupils moved around the school with great confidence. Records of Needs were well managed and regular reviews ensured effective multi-agency working.

Personal and social development

A key strength across the school were the excellent approaches to promoting pupils' personal, social and emotional wellbeing. All staff were committed to promoting pupils' self esteem and independence. During outdoor education trips, pupils were challenged through a range of suitable activities and residential visits. Senior pupils had very useful appropriately supported opportunities to improve their practical life skills through overnight stays in the school flat. In Canaan Lane, musical links with a mainstream school and attendance at a festival provided very good opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their skills through performing and working with others. Across the two campuses the very good approaches to mobility training maximised pupils' sense of independence and increased their overall

confidence. The range of evening activities for residential pupils further enhanced their self esteem through providing good links with the community.

Curricular and vocational guidance and Leaving School

Pupils received very good curricular and vocational guidance. The school's arrangements to assist subject choice at transition stages supported pupils and parents very well to make appropriate curricular choices. The careers adviser made a valued contribution and supported pupils very well through individual interviews, attendance at review meetings and in their post-school options. Pupils were encouraged to use the up-to-date careers library. The school librarian supported them well in accessing computer-based sources of reference for careers. Pupils considering future study benefited from the school's well-established links with further education institutions. Care and education staff encouraged and supported young people in determining career choices, and liaised with outside agencies to establish links for young people. The school had established a very well structured work experience programme both within the school and local community. All pupils engaged in at least three periods of work experience during their time in S4 -S6. These good experiences helped pupils to make career choices.

5.How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Supporting pupils' education

At Canaan Lane campus, improving approaches to liaison between teaching and care staff ensured that children and young people received effective collaborative support for their learning. In Craigmillar Park, there were a few very good examples of links between subject and care staff. However, these were not consistent across that campus. Pupils at both sites were supported by care staff in extending their learning during the evening, including making very good use of the excellent library facilities.

The curriculum, learning and teaching

Across both sites, the quality of the curriculum was very good. In Craigmillar Park, primary and secondary pupils at S1 and S2 stages benefited from an appropriate range of subjects which took good account of national guidelines. The curriculum was also suitably individualised for a number of primary and secondary pupils who required more support in their learning. In S3/S4 the school had developed a good range of subjects leading to National Qualifications at Access and Intermediate levels. Standard Grade and Higher Grade certification were also available in most subjects. Enterprise activities were successfully delivered through a coffee shop run by pupils.

The curriculum in Canaan Lane effectively covered all relevant subject areas. A themed approach ensured breadth and balance across subjects and provided interesting contexts in which to develop pupils' skills and experiences. The school's approaches to developing pupils' communication were successfully delivered through a range of strategies including using a system of signing on the pupils' person, as well as through pictures and symbols, gesture and communication switches. Across both campuses, information and communication technology (ICT) was used well to support pupils' learning. Personal and social development (PSD), which included independent living skills, mobility training and expressive arts, had a strong focus throughout the school.

Across both sites the quality of teaching was very good. In almost all classes across both campuses teachers gave clear instructions and directions. They planned lessons well and interacted very positively with pupils. Staff knew the pupils well and had developed a very good range of approaches to ensure effective communication and interaction. Teachers shared the content of lessons with pupils and made it clear to pupils what they were expected to learn. Where necessary, Braille was successfully taught to ensure pupils had full access to the curriculum. Approaches to the use of Braille were very good particularly at the upper stages. Pupils were encouraged to be actively involved in their learning and as appropriate were presented with challenging tasks and activities. Almost all pupils were enthusiastic and motivated in their learning. They were hard working, keen to share their ideas and eager to please staff. The pace of learning was very well matched to the needs of pupils. Almost all pupils listened well, took turns when asked and responded with enthusiasm.

Attainment

At Craigmillar Park at the primary stages and at S1/S2, the overall attainment of pupils was very good. Almost all pupils had achieved their individual targets in English language and mathematics. A few pupils had achieved national standards within 5-14 levels which were appropriate to their ability. Almost all pupils were progressing well in other subject areas including physical education and science.

At S3/S4/S5, pupils had attained very good qualifications across a wide range of subjects at levels appropriate to their ability, including from Access Level 1 to Higher Grade.

At all stages, pupils were consistently reminded of the high standard of work expected and they almost always presented their work carefully.

At Canaan Lane pupils attained high standards across the curriculum in their course work. They consistently achieved the targets within their IEPs. However, pupils from S3 upwards had not had their achievement recognised through National Qualifications or other similar accreditation.

Information on the subjects inspected is given later in the report. Significant features of attainment in subjects not inspected were as follows.

- In art in Craigmillar Park, pupils at S3/S4 were skilled in making evaluative descriptions of their work.
- In music in Canaan Lane, pupils showed high levels of confidence when supported to use a range of instruments to mimic weather sounds. In Craigmillar Park a group of S3/S4 pupils sang very well in harmony.
- Across both sites pupils benefited in different ways from very good baking activities. Senior pupils in Craigmillar Park were proud to bake for the café.
- In religious and moral education (RME), pupils at S4 ably discussed a very challenging moral dilemma. The discussion was very well directed by the class teacher and all pupils made excellent and thoughtful contributions.

- In drama, pupils at S1 acted out their own dramatic contribution to an aspect of a story they were studying. All pupils were fully in character and displayed a real insight into the story through their actions and comments.

English

Learning and teaching

In Craigmillar Park, teachers had established very good relationships with pupils and structured their lessons to meet the needs of individual pupils. In most lessons teachers shared the content of the lesson with pupils. For example, at primary stages, teachers fully supported pupils who were developing fluency in, and a good understanding of their reading. Teachers gave very clear instructions and pupils listened well and responded enthusiastically to teachers' questioning and most made very good contributions to group discussions and interactions. Praise was used very effectively both to confirm pupils' responses and to extend and develop pupils' ideas, particularly in their written texts. Direct teaching approaches were used very well with individual pupils. For example, a few pupils were working well at the early stages of word recognition through practical matching activities. All pupils were hard working and almost all were well focused on their language tasks. At all times pupils were encouraged to be fully involved in their learning.

Achievement

In Craigmillar Park, almost all pupils were making very good progress in their coursework. Almost all pupils at primary stages met their personal learning targets in reading, writing, listening and talking. A few pupils had attained national standards in reading and writing. By the end of S2, the majority of pupils had attained national standards in reading and writing. Most secondary pupils working on individual targets had made good progress in their language and communication. In the last three years the number of pupils presented at Access and Intermediate levels had increased. Almost all pupils working at Intermediate level had attained good grades. Some pupils in S3 and S4 had attained awards at Access 2 and Access 3 levels. There were no pupils in S4 last year. However, predictions suggested that most pupils to be presented this session will gain a Credit or General pass. A few pupils had attained a very good pass in Higher English.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- Pupils had further developed their language skills through their involvement in environmental, drama and religious and moral education projects.
- In subject classes, secondary pupils used ICT well to present very good written work.
- In both verbal and written responses to literary texts, many pupils offered perceptive, well-considered comments.

Language and communication

In Canaan Lane, most pupils communicated very well through speech, expressive responses, gesture and the use of communication switches. A few pupils were acquiring basic skills in talking and listening and were able to communicate for a range of practical social purposes,

such as shopping and going to the library. Pupils in all classes responded very positively to focused and well-planned interactions by staff including therapy staff. A well-developed signing system which included on-body signing was used very effectively to develop pupils' communication skills, their awareness of others and their environment. Pupils used gesture and facial expressions well to convey their feelings and in all classes pupils were enthusiastic and motivated to learn. In a few lessons pupils showed very good skills in anticipating and displayed their pleasure in gesture and in a few cases through verbalisation. Pupils responded well and enjoyed the very practical, sensory approaches to their learning. Very good listening skills were evident in all lessons. Pupils were developing their communication skills within a very positive and stimulating learning environment.

Achievement

In Canaan Lane the overall quality of pupils' achievement in language and communication was very good. Almost all pupils were making very good progress in achieving their individualised targets.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- Pupils participated very well in well-planned sensory stories and showed a good understanding of the story by their responses.
- Pupils successfully used their communication switches to communicate their views and add to a story during a language lesson.

Mathematics

Learning and teaching

In Craigmillar Park, in almost all classes, teachers provided clear explanations of mathematical concepts within an effective direct interactive approach. They made effective use of questioning to determine pupils' understanding and keep them actively involved in their learning. In most classes the purpose of the aims of the lesson was shared with pupils but only in best practice was progress discussed at the end of lessons. A good emphasis was placed on pupils' explaining their working in reaching correct answers in some classes. Teachers were making some effective use of ICT to further develop pupils' mathematical skills. Particularly in the primary classes and supported classes in the secondary, effective use was made of real objects and everyday situations to support learning. Homework was used regularly to reinforce classwork in the secondary classes but was more variable in the primary. In almost all classes, pupils were very well motivated and engaged effectively in their learning at a steady pace. Within the small class situation, tasks and activities were overall very well matched to pupils' needs.

Achievement

In Craigmillar Park, almost all pupils in the primary and early stages of secondary were making steady progress in their classwork within the 5-14 programme. Most showed some good skills in their written and mental calculations in their number work appropriate to their ability level. Pupils engaged appropriately in problem solving activities but were not

confident in the use of a range of problem solving strategies. Pupils in S3-S6 were progressing well in their class work. In S3 at Access 2 level pupils showed a good understanding of time. Pupils in S4 in Access 3 mathematics were making steady progress in achieving individual units of work. Pupils had been successful overall in gaining a range of unit and cluster awards at Access levels with a some pupils gaining awards at Standard Grade, Intermediate 2 and commendably, Higher level.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- Across all stages pupils could interpret graphs and showed good skills in collecting information in real life situations.
- In the Intermediate 2 class in S4 pupils showed good skills in plotting graphs using algebraic formulae.
- Pupils in S6 were successfully developing their financial management in real life situations through their involvement in managing the finance of the school café enterprise activity.

Mathematics and understanding and relating to the environment

In Canaan Lane, the effective use of themes such as the weather and buildings provided motivating and suitable contexts for learning. Pupils' understanding about the environment was enhanced through experiences across the curriculum. For example, in music they experimented with different instruments which represented aspects of the weather. Senior pupils undertook visits in the community to discover the function of a range of buildings. Well-planned sensory corners in classrooms stimulated pupils' imagination and motivated them to explore and discover through their senses and by using switches. Therapists worked closely with teachers to provide progressive programmes to support pupils in their use of switches, including operating wheelchairs. Pupils who were at an early stage in literacy and numeracy were given appropriate experiences, but did not yet have sufficient access to a broad range of ICT to extend their learning.

Achievement

In Canaan Lane, pupils were making very good progress in learning about and understanding aspects of their immediate and wider environment. Almost all pupils were making very good progress within their understanding and relating to the environment targets.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- Pupils' awareness and understanding of cause and effect and opportunities for visual stimulation were developed through the very good facilities in the hydrotherapy pool and the multi-sensory areas.
- Baking sessions provided pupils with very good tactile, tracking and tasting opportunities.

Science

Learning and teaching

In Craigmillar Park, the secondary mainstream class teachers used an appropriate range of approaches with a very good emphasis on direct interactive teaching of individuals or the whole class. They explained scientific concepts very well and gave homework regularly. In particular, they used questioning skilfully to determine pupils' understanding and extend their learning. ICT was used well to allow pupils to engage appropriately in the class tasks and enhance their overall learning experiences. Teachers shared the purpose of lessons with pupils but did not always consolidate their learning at the ends of lessons. All pupils in secondary mainstream classes worked very conscientiously on tasks given, and when possible worked well independently. They cooperated very well and supported each other in practical work. The choice of tasks and activities undertaken by pupils in the mainstream science classes was very appropriate to their needs.

Achievement

Almost all pupils in mainstream science classes were performing well in their recent coursework. Pupils in physics had a good knowledge about the effect of different lenses on rays of light. Overall, pupils showed effective skills in working cooperatively in planning, carrying out and discussing results of their science investigations. Pupils had achieved success in a range of science units and clusters at Access levels, with a few achieving awards at Intermediate 2 and Standard Grade biology. There was no reliable attainment information available on how well pupils were progressing in the primary and in S1/S2 supported classes due to lack of a structured programme and assessment.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- In biology at S3/S4, pupils were able to describe a variety of ways of propagating plants.
- Pupils in S1 showed good understanding of the states of matter and pupils in S2 were able to describe the effect of heat on enzyme action.

Physical education

Learning and teaching

Across the two sites very effective direct teaching approaches ensured that pupils' needs were well met. Teachers worked hard with individual pupils to provide interesting and appropriate tasks. Explanations and instructions were clear and pupils understood what they needed to do to improve their movement and performance. Staff used questioning effectively and there were many instances of high quality interaction between pupils and staff particularly in relation to feedback. In almost all lessons pupils were enthusiastic and motivated and were active for the majority of their lesson. The varied programme of activities ensured high levels of participation and some older pupils demonstrated their ability to work independently of the teacher. However, there were too few opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. Pupils at Canaan Lane campus benefited greatly from teachers' and therapists' attention to functional movement programmes including stretching, manipulating and rebounding in addition to the hydrotherapy sessions. When appropriate staff sought opportunities to bring pupils from both campuses together for physical education and this was proving to have a beneficial effect for those involved.

Achievement

Almost all pupils from P1 to P7 and S1 to S6 were making good progress in their learning. Pupils in primary were successfully developing their movement skills in both swimming and gymnastics and in secondary, pupils were increasing their fitness levels through combining swimming with other work on circuit training and isolated fitness machines. While pupils in P1 to S2 performed well in classes observed as yet there was no reliable formal attainment information available. While no pupils had achieved a Performance Unit award in 2005, pupils in previous years had done so successfully at levels ranging from Access 2 to Intermediate 1. The majority of pupils in S3/S4 were expected to pass unit awards this session. Two students were successfully undertaking course awards at Intermediate 2 and Intermediate 1 respectively and were making promising progress.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- The improving performances and motivation levels of those pupils who participated successfully in extra curricular activities.
- Pupils' involvement in weekly physical tasks as homework exercises to improve fitness levels.
- The high quality of individual performances in national competitions notably in swimming and athletics.

Personal and social education

Learning and teaching

In Craigmillar Park, pupils were responding enthusiastically in classes. Teachers provided motivating and useful contexts for lessons to reinforce pupils' understanding of life and social skills and health-related issues. Very good practical activities ensured improved understanding of pupils who required additional support. In mainstream classes senior pupils gained confidence through well-planned work experience. However, the school had not allocated sufficient time to deliver the planned programme of personal and social education (PSE) for S3 and S4 pupils in mainstream classes. Pupils' knowledge of vocational opportunities did not receive sufficient attention from S1 to S6. Advocacy workers who were working with pupils in the residences were not yet involved in PSE classes. Staff had reviewed the school's career education policy but had yet to fully implement it for all pupils.

In Canaan Lane, pupils were encouraged to interact socially with adults and peers through oral prompts, musical stimuli and on-body signs. Links with a Craigmillar Park class allowed excellent peer group interaction. They responded very well to some staff who showed high levels of skill in intensive interaction. Snack times were used very effectively by staff to promote appropriate levels of independence in eating and drinking skills as well as creating calm and pleasant experiences. Pupils responded well to good morning sessions, clearly showing their enjoyment at being at school and having good awareness of the routines of the school day. Very good programmes developed by therapists and teachers ensured aspects of personal development such as feeding, drinking, positioning and communication were progressively developed across classes and residences. However, arrangements at lunchtimes did not always ensure that support within these programmes was

consistent. Staff provided appropriate experiences for senior pupils to support them in their transition from school. However, the school had not yet sufficiently explored how to use nationally accredited programmes to recognise these pupils' achievements.

Achievement

At all stages across the school, pupils were making good and sometimes very good progress in personal and social education within the planned programmes. Pupils' achievements within PSE were recognised through Duke of Edinburgh and Caledonian Award schemes. Senior pupils in the supported classes in Craigmillar Park had successfully achieved an appropriate range of National Qualification awards. In Canaan Lane, pupils received high levels of support to enable them to make very good progress towards meeting their PSD targets.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- At Craigmillar Park, pupils shared responsibilities in the coffee shop.
- The school had raised pupils' self esteem through successes in art and website design competitions.
- At Canaan Lane, pupils responded very well to excellent opportunities for raised tactile and auditory awareness through well-planned massage approaches.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation in Craigmillar Park campus was good. In Canaan Lane campus it was excellent.</p> <p>In Craigmillar Park, most young people who were residents had their own bedroom, which they were encouraged to personalise with posters, photos and favourite items. Lockable facilities were provided. Pupils had readily available fruit and drinks and made use of kitchens within the units to participate in the preparation of occasional meals. The school had worked hard to improve the quality of meals for pupils at Craigmillar Park. Privacy in the residential areas was sometimes a problem because of the close proximity of bedrooms to classrooms. The lift was inadequate to accommodate pupils in wheelchairs comfortably and resulted in delays reaching classes. The reception area to Craigmillar Park and classrooms were bright and welcoming. The large assembly hall provided good opportunities for whole school events and there was a large dining area on the second floor. The small, well stocked library was used very well by pupils and staff. Pupils benefited from a well resourced craft and design room, the science laboratory and the swimming pool.</p> <p>In Canaan Lane, the recent programme of refurbishment had ensured excellent residential facilities for pupils. Rooms were spacious and of a very high quality with en-suite facilities and necessary specialised</p>

	<p>equipment. Each unit had excellent kitchen and dining facilities along with an attractive spacious living room. The six houses were interlinked and joined to the school by a covered walkway. Each classroom in Canaan Lane had an open teaching area surrounded by withdrawal rooms, light stimulation or tactile areas and a small kitchen area. Large classrooms enabled staff to work very effectively with pupils. Very good storage space allowed cumbersome equipment to be kept safely. Consideration had been given to texture and colour of floor coverings, for example corridors had noisy floors so that the presence of other people was easily heard. Pupils benefited from two hydrotherapy pools, a gymnasium, a soft room and multi-sensory areas.</p> <p>Fire safety procedures were in place at both campuses. However, these had not been implemented appropriately at Canaan Lane campus. The school was monitoring and continuing to review fire drills particularly during the night. Fire Risk Assessments were out of date. A number of issues were identified with regard to security. The school planned to undertake a review of some aspects of security.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>The overall quality of climate and relationships was good. All staff and pupils worked well together and were proud of their school. The school had a positive and welcoming atmosphere which was conducive to pupils' learning. Behaviour was of a high standard and pupils were polite and caring towards one another. Pupils had good opportunities to contribute to decision making through committees and the pupil council. Education staff worked well as a team on each site. However, the morale of some groups of staff was low due to their reservations about the effectiveness of communication, the recent management restructure and anxieties about the school's future. The quality of expectations and promoting achievements was very good. Pupils were confident and well motivated in their learning. Praise was used effectively to acknowledge pupils' achievements. Assemblies provided good opportunities for regular religious observance and to learn about other beliefs and customs. Staff actively promoted a sense of fairness and mutual respect. The school had an appropriate policy for race equality and intended to provide further relevant staff development.</p>
<p>Partnership with parents and carers and the community</p>	<p>The quality of partnership with parents and carers and the community was good overall. Parents were positive about the care and support given by all staff. Annual parents' evenings and written reports provided good information on their child's progress in their learning. However, the school had not yet involved parents in setting their child's learning targets and had not provided advice on next steps in learning. Comprehensive school handbooks, regular newsletters and daily diaries provided</p>

	<p>good information. Parents and carers were appropriately consulted and informed when sensitive health issues were being taught. A recent family day at Canaan Lane provided very good opportunities for pupils, parents and staff to have fun together. Parents and carers valued the role of the parent counsellor who supported the family when needed including when their child was about to move to their next placement.</p> <p>The school chaplain and sometimes members of the church congregation visited the school. The school had very good links with some local primary and secondary schools. Several members of staff had taken part in a range of European projects. Good links were also established with a number of local businesses.</p>
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7. Improving the school

The principal had been appointed in April 2004 but due to an injury had been absent from post for several months. During his absence senior managers had ensured that pupils' needs continued to be effectively met. The Royal Blind School provided a very positive and caring environment for pupils. Pupils were highly motivated, confident and hard-working. The quality of teaching and learning was of a high standard and almost all pupils achieved very well. Staff worked together to meet the needs of pupils very well and used a range of very effective strategies to ensure pupils' disabilities were overcome. The school worked hard to ensure pupils were well prepared to live as independently as possible when they moved on from school.

Management and staffing

As a result of recent changes to the management structure, all staff had an identified line manager. The school had good plans to ensure improved support and supervision but staff appraisal procedures had yet to be implemented. A programme of appropriate training was in place and most care staff had or were in the process of completing an appropriate qualification. However, not all night staff were appropriately qualified. Staff ratios were sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The school now intended to provide a staffing schedule agreed by the Care Commission, which reflected minimum staffing levels and ensured adequate staff cover for lunch supervision at Canaan Lane campus. The school had not always ensured that its recruitment policy effectively identified the ongoing medical suitability of all staff. The school had in place a good range of appropriate policies. However, it had not yet developed a policy on missing persons or sensitively shared with parents the policy on death, dying and resuscitation.

Self evaluation

The school had recently involved external consultants to evaluate aspects of the school and had acted positively on advice given. Commendably, care staff in one campus were involved in systematic evaluation of their work, using National Care Standards and quality indicators to inform their assessments. However, education staff, particularly at one campus were at an early stage in using quality indicators and National Care

Standards to fully evaluate the work of the school. Parents had not been consulted about the quality of provision and there were differences across the two sites in assuring the quality of teaching and learning. Across both campuses there was no systematic tracking or formal monitoring by senior managers of pupils' progress. Approaches to improvement planning varied across the two sites. Overall approaches to self evaluation were adequate.

Leadership

The management team consisted of the principal, vice principal and head of residential services. All were well respected and highly committed to developing this nationally recognised resource. The principal had established good relationships with pupils, staff and parents. He had a clear vision for the future of the school as a national centre of excellence in the field of visual impairment, but he had not yet fully shared this with all staff. The vice principal very effectively led Canaan Lane campus. His specialist experience and knowledge were widely recognised in Scotland and Europe. The head of residential care had a strong commitment to providing a high quality service. She was focused on the wellbeing of staff and young people and was knowledgeable about the challenges faced by the staff team. The principal had introduced a new management structure to better reflect the wide range of management responsibilities. He had worked hard to develop good relationships with members of the Board of Governors to encourage them to engage more effectively with staff, pupils and parents. Together they had established a working group to explore future options for the school. However, not all staff felt fully consulted about these developments and were anxious about their own and the school's future. The working party was due to feed back to staff in the near future. The changing role of the vice principal whose remit now extended across the school had yet to be fully explored.

The management team were ably supported by three deputy heads who fulfilled their remits well. All were professionally knowledgeable, had very effectively developed appropriate curricula and worked hard to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The heads of care who had a sound knowledge of the individual needs of children and young people were dedicated to ensuring the all round wellbeing of the children and young people in their care. However, the principal had not yet considered how to extend the senior management team in order to effectively consult with deputy headteachers, heads of care, senior therapists and nursing staff about strategic priorities. The roles and responsibilities of the recently appointed principal teachers were not yet fully understood by all staff. The management of the school had yet to address the inconsistent approach to improvement planning and quality assurance across the school. Overall, the quality of leadership was adequate.

Main points for action

The school and the Board of Governors should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- Develop a policy on missing persons and ensure parents are familiar with the school's policy on death and dying including agreement on resuscitation.

- Review the accommodation and the use of the lift in Craigmillar Park campus.
- Continue to improve the quality of collaborative working among care and education staff to ensure consistent strategies when supporting pupils.
- Ensure all staff receive relevant training on child protection, including information on relevant legislation.
- Monitor the remits of senior and middle management to ensure all aspects of care and education are fully supported.
- Develop a robust system of quality assurance incorporating the use of quality indicators and care standards to ensure effective self evaluation across the school.
- Ensure board members maintain an overview of the quality of care and education across the school.
- Use the report from the assigned working party, to take forward the school in whatever direction decided and ensure staff have access to information and a shared vision of the school's future.

Requirements

It is a requirement that a system is developed to ensure medical suitability for all staff.

This is to comply with:

Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 Number 114 Regulation 9(2)(a)

Timescale: Within one month of the publication of this report.

It is a requirement that arrangements for security are reviewed, as discussed with the principal.

This is to comply with:

Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 Number 114 Regulation 10(1)(2)

Timescale: commence within 24 hours of the publication of this report.

It is a requirement that an appropriate policy on infection control is developed and implemented.

This is to comply with:

Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 Number 114 Regulation 4(1)(d)

Timescale: completed by the next Care Commission inspection.

It is a requirement that Fire Risk Assessments are updated regularly.

This is to comply with:

Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 Number 114 Regulation 4(1)(a)

Timescale: commence within 24 hours of publication of this report and completed by next Care Commission inspection.

What happens next

The school and the Board of Governors have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Shelagh McDougall
Care Commission Officer

Jane Lopez
HM Inspector

15 February 2006

Appendix 1 Framework for Inspection

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL and SECURE ACCOMMODATION SERVICES INTEGRATED INSPECTIONS BY CARE COMMISSION AND HMIE

The inspection team gives particular attention to the National Standards for *School Care Accommodation Services* and Quality Indicators from *How good is our school?* (2002 edition, incorporating the six-point scale) under the following report headings.

How well are pupils supported?	
Standard 3 Standard 1 Standard 6 Standard 15 QI 3.4 QI 4.2 Standard 16 QI 4.3	Care and protection Arriving for the first time Support arrangements Supporting communication Meeting pupils' needs Personal and social development Leaving school Curricular and vocational guidance
How good are learning, teaching, attainment and achievement?	
Standard 14 QI 1.1 QI 2.1 QI 3.2 QI 3.3	Supporting your education Structure of the curriculum Overall quality of attainment The teaching process Pupils' learning experiences
How good is the environment for care and learning?	
Standard 5 QI 6.1 QI 5.1 QI 5.2 QI 5.3 QI 5.4	Comfort, safety and security Accommodation and facilities Climate and relationships Expectations and promoting achievement Equality and fairness Partnerships with parents and the community
Improving the school	
Standard 7 QI 7.2 QI 7.5 QI 7.4	Management and staffing Self-evaluation Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities Leadership

Indicators of quality

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
Structure of the curriculum	Very good
The teaching process	Very good
Pupils' learning experiences	Very good
Meeting pupils' needs	Very good
Overall attainment	Very good
How well are pupils supported?	
Pastoral care	Good
Personal and social development	Excellent
Curricular and vocational guidance	Very good
How good is the environment for learning?	
Accommodation and facilities	Good
Craigmillar Park	Excellent
Canaan Lane	
Climate and relationships	Good
Expectations and promoting achievement	Very good
Equality and fairness	Very good
Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community	Good
Improving the school	
Leadership	Adequate
Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities	Good
Self-evaluation	Adequate

This report uses the following word scale to make clear the judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	excellent
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

The sections in the above table follow the order of this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and so may be mentioned in those other sections too.

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care and education staff worked in partnership to support their children. • Staff made them feel welcome in the school and they were confident that if they raised a matter of concern the school would do something about it. • Their children were treated fairly and staff showed concern for their care and welfare. • Work was stimulating and challenging and their children enjoyed being at school. • The school was well led and had a good reputation in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parents and carers were satisfied with all aspects of the school.
What pleased pupils in Craigmillar Park campus most	What pupils in Craigmillar Park campus would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school was good at helping them if they were having difficulties. • They enjoyed being at school and teachers explained things clearly. • Staff listened to them and let them know when they did something well. • They felt safe and secure in school. • Staff checked and marked their homework. • They had opportunities to contribute to decision making within the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few pupils expressed some concerns about the extent to which staff treated all pupils fairly.
What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff set high standards for achievement, and pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. • The school maintained good relations with the local community. • They liked working in the school. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils. • There was mutual respect between staff and pupils. • Care staff and teachers ensured pupils received constructive feedback about their work and behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team work of senior managers. • Communication among staff and between senior managers and staff.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the principal and school staff, the Board of Governors, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA or by telephoning 01506 600 389. Copies are also available on our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about integrated inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of provision for pupils with additional support needs, you should write in the first instance to Kenneth Muir, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600 258 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk.

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