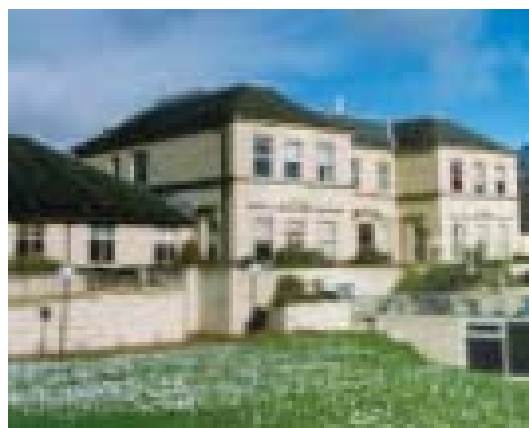


**ROYAL
BLIND**

Royal Blind School



The Royal Blind School

Progress Report March 2008

**Report on progress since the inspection of
September 2005**

Introduction

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of the Royal Blind School in February 2006. The school and the Education Executive Committee prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report. The work in relation to the Care Commission was followed up in subsequent Care Commission Inspections of the service. In addition, an extensive improvement plan written in July 2007 took account of actions outstanding in the original action plan. The improvement plan also took forward other issues which had arisen as a result of a broad audit of quality across care and education. This report refers to the work undertaken as a result of both plans.

Continuous improvement

Since the last integrated inspection the Royal Blind School has continued to provide a high standard of education and care for its children and young people. In addition, the school has undergone very many changes. The new Principal took up post in November 2006 and immediately undertook a Best Value Review because of the financial pressures on the school. While this led to a reduction in the number of senior managers in care and a reduction in the number of Principal Teacher posts, it also offered an opportunity to examine more closely and adjust the roles of senior managers in care and education. As a result the job descriptions of education managers have been realigned to reflect more accurately the priorities for improvement and national developments such as a *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Leadership for Learning*. During the past year the school has played a leading role in contributing to the development of national competences for teachers of pupils with visual impairment. The Principal and the Chair of the Education Executive Committee have made very good links with some local authorities in order to promote the role of the school in providing outreach support locally. An on-going review of the role and clinical management of nursing staff is clarifying how to take forward this important aspect of the school. Overall the school has undertaken some major strategic developments to improve its financial standing whilst also demonstrating the high level of knowledge and ability of its staff to support children and young people with visual impairment.

Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The integrated inspection report identified eight main points for action. The progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders are reported in the following section. The work undertaken to overcome the four requirements identified in the integrated report has been evaluated and found to be satisfactory by Care Commission officers during their programme of solo inspections.

Main Points for Action

1. Monitor the remits of senior and middle management to ensure all aspects of care and education are fully supported

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The new Principal made a speedy start to addressing this recommendation through undertaking a Best Value Review in January 2007. The review consisted of observation of both care and education, consideration of reports from the Care Commission, many meetings with relevant staff and young people, financial considerations viz-a-viz predicted roll, the needs of placing authorities and the demands of the (24 hour) curriculum. The outcome was the restructuring of senior management in care and outreach provision which has led to much clearer lines of accountability and communication within care. This in turn has resulted in more consistent practice by care staff. The roles of senior and middle managers in education have also been reviewed. The new job descriptions respond to tasks identified within the improvement plan as well as from national initiatives. Senior education staff are at an early stage in implementing these new roles, but the roles provide a better sense of direction and take better account of the concept of distributed leadership as described within the HMIE document *Leadership for Learning*¹.

2. Review the accommodation and the use of the lift in Craigmillar Park campus.

The school has met this recommendation.

A report referred to as the Blue Sky Report, submitted to the Education Executive Committee in January 2007, was the result of a comprehensive review of the accommodation within the school which will in the long term address fully the issues. Meantime, staff were fully involved in the creation of the report and consulted on the outcomes. Robust timetabling to minimise the difficulties of the accommodation, taking account of the location of classrooms and pupil groupings, has ensured that the needs of the existing school population are fully met. Individual risk assessments, to support pupils in residential accommodation adjacent to a small number of teaching areas, have ensured the privacy of the identified living area for our children and young people. Also as an interim measure, use of the lift has been restricted to those pupils and adults unable to use the stairs. The lift is fully maintained.

A small action group to take forward work on the Blue Sky Report was established by the Board of Directors. It has engaged in a detailed analysis of the projected school roll and the required accommodation as a means of informing the decision making process and design brief for Craigmillar Park campus. A project plan is to be developed to ensure that structural changes to the school and residential accommodation are effectively managed and take account of all matters related to accessibility.

3. Continue to improve the quality of collaborative working among care and education staff to ensure consistent strategies when supporting pupils.

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this recommendation.

The new Depute Care, together with her colleagues on the senior management team, gave priority to promoting close collaborative working across both campuses of the school. Timetabled meetings of care and education staff support effective collaboration and have resulted in care staff having a much clearer understanding of targets in individualised educational programmes (IEPs), including being clear about how best to communicate with each young person. Teachers are clear about targets in care plans, particularly in relation to personal and social development (PSD) and health-related needs. There is now much greater consistency in approaches to young people in terms of their learning, behaviour and health needs. Education staff are more informed about the excellent range of evening and weekend activities available for young people which extend their opportunities for broad achievement. Care staff are more confident when supporting young people with homework, particularly on the Craigmillar Park campus. All staff on the Canaan campus are more confident about how to respond to the complex health needs of all young people.

4. Ensure all staff receive relevant training on child protection, including information on relevant legislation.

As a result of extensive staff development, excellent progress has been made towards meeting this recommendation.

There is now absolute clarity about the role of the Principal as the child protection coordinator (CPC) and the support role of the Deputes Care and Support for Pupils. The new policy and procedures have ensured that all staff are now clear about the appropriateness of actions to be taken. The policy has been very effectively disseminated and by the end of February 2008 all staff will have received formal in-depth training in addition to the regular training in child protection. The school has also shared its policy with the host education authority, Edinburgh City. Senior staff are very clear about the importance of their role in supporting and monitoring the practice of other staff in relation to child protection issues. The considerable work done to respond to this main point for action has ensured speedy, consistent and appropriate responses by staff. The CPC and Deputes Care and Support for Pupils are experienced in relation to liaising with placing authority personnel with responsibility for Child Protection. The children and young people are safe and secure in the school.

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

The school has met this main point for action.

In order to meet this requirement the school has ensured that parents of pupils already in the school and parents of new pupils are clear regarding how the school will meet the obligations of its duty of care towards the children and young people across care and education. The development of a policy on 'Children Missing from School' reinforces the commitment of staff to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children and young people within the school. Laying out the procedures to be

followed gives assurance to parents and carers of the positive action to be taken. The health trust, NHS Lothian, has worked with the school management team to advise on the protocols around supporting the health needs of all our children and young people. Nursing staff have a clear role in maintaining the health of the children and young people and effectively support care and education staff. The Care Commission reports have acknowledged the progress in meeting this recommendation.

To improve the delivery of health services to children and young people, the Principal has commissioned NHS Lothian to undertake an audit of nursing services within the Royal Blind School. Relevant support from NHS Lothian will serve to ensure that a number of issues related to the delivery of health continue to be effectively addressed.

6. Develop a robust system of quality assurance incorporating the use of quality indicators and care standards to ensure effective self evaluation across the school.

The school has made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The school now has an effective quality assurance (QA) policy. This clarifies roles and responsibilities across care and education in relation to assuring quality through a range of monitoring by senior managers and robust self-evaluation by all staff. Regular supervision of staff ensures practice is supported and training needs are identified. As a result of this improved approach to assuring quality, senior staff are more confident that practice is continuously monitored and that the needs of children and young people are consistently met.

7. Ensure board members maintain an overview of the quality of care and education across the school

The Board of Directors and the school have made significant progress towards meeting this recommendation.

The Chair of the Board of Royal Blind which is responsible for a range of services across Scotland, for people who are blind or have a visual impairment, also chairs the working group on taking forward the Blue Sky Report. The Education Executive Committee overviews the work of the school on both campuses and reports to the Board. The Principal of the school presents regular comprehensive reports to the Board, via the Education Executive Committee, the membership of which includes parents and staff as well as Board members. The Committee offers the Principal information, consultation, support and advice. The findings of the Best Value audit along with the improvement plan were also presented to the Board, via the Education Executive Committee, and gained their approval. The new Convener of the Education Executive Committee has a keen interest and much relevant experience in quality assurance and has already met with staff and young people. She meets with the Principal to review her work.

¹HM Inspectors of Education (2007) *Leadership for Learning* HMIE

²HM Inspectors of Education (2006) *How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence* HMIE

The Convener and Principal have cooperated very effectively to take forward partnerships with local authorities in order to promote the school's role in providing outreach provision for pupils with visual impairment. The Chair of the Board visits the school regularly and members of the Board regularly attend events in the school. A visit to the school is an important part of the programme of induction of new members of the Board.

8. 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

The Board of Directors and the school have made good progress in respect of this main point for action.

The developments within the report have been incorporated within the current school planning framework. The school has made very good progress in communicating a vision for the future role of the school. The Principal and her senior managers continue to reassure staff that their role is to continue to support the children in their care. The work of the Principal and the Convener of the Education Executive Committee in promoting outreach work is viewed very positively by many staff as a new and important way forward. The reviewed remits of some senior staff have also recognised this initiative. The school's role in developing the national competences for teachers of pupils with visual impairment provides another important future focus for the school.

Conclusion

The school has worked very hard and very effectively to overtake all the main points for action. In addition it has dealt with many other significant issues. These include ensuring it has become increasingly financially viable at a time when referrals to the school have decreased because of the desire of placing authorities to educate and, when necessary, care for pupils with visual impairment locally. The Principal has taken steps to move the school in different directions so that it remains as a national centre of excellence in the field of visual impairment. The school now has robust systems in place to ensure children are very effectively protected. The new remits across care and education clarify roles and responsibilities and promote better communication and accountability. The approaches to quality assurance ensure the quality of care and education is constantly under review. Staff are effectively supported and supervised to ensure the needs of all children and young people are met well. Overall the school has demonstrated a very good capacity to develop and improve.



Mr James Finlay
Chairman
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Canaan Lane Campus
43-45 Canaan Lane
Edinburgh
EH10 4SG

Telephone: 0131 446 3120
Fax: 0131 447 9266
Email: canaan@royalblindschool.org.uk

Craigmillar Park Campus
Craigmillar Park
Edinburgh
EH16 5NA

Telephone: 0131 667 1100
Fax: 0131 662 9700
Email: office@royalblindschool.org.uk