

Summarised inspection findings

The Royal Blind School

Edinburgh

18 November 2025

Key contextual information

School name The Royal Blind School, Edinburgh
SEED number: 5571146

The Royal Blind School (RBS) is a grant-aided special school situated in the Morningside area of Edinburgh. The school provides specialist education, care and learning to children and young people with visual impairment, including those with additional complex needs. The school roll is 28. Children and young people are aged from six to 20 years. The school is led by a head of education and two depute headteachers. At the time of the inspection one of the depute headteachers was absent. Five learners attend the school on a shared placement basis with a mainstream school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximize their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The ethos and culture of the school reflect a strong commitment to children's rights and positive relationships. Staff develop and maintain a nurturing and inclusive environment where children and young people's achievements are celebrated. The school's vision and values underpin staff's kind and caring approach to learning and teaching effectively. Staff are highly sensitive to the social, emotional, and learning needs of each child and young person. Teachers and support staff develop strong, trusting relationships with children and young people. This supports learners to engage well in their learning and improve their wellbeing. Almost all children and young people show enjoyment and pride when they succeed in their learning experiences. All children and young people behave well and support each other. They show high levels of respect for their peers and the adults who help them.
- Staff provide learners with regular opportunities to exercise choice. Learners make effective use of a range of communication aids, including switches and digital devices, to express their preferences and participate meaningfully in lessons. Teachers and support staff use a wide range of communication strategies effectively. These include signing, on-body signing and augmented technology. Staff use songs and other auditory cues well to support routines and transitions throughout the day. Teachers use multi-sensory approaches well to enrich children and young people's learning experiences. Teachers use digital technologies effectively to support participation in storytelling, music-making, and choice-making activities. Staff's well-developed understanding of each child's visual impairment helps them, where appropriate, to support children to develop their skills needed to learn to use Braille.
- Staff use the physical environment of the school effectively to enable learners to develop new skills to help them become independent and participate fully in society. Staff have reviewed classroom layouts and learning spaces to ensure they are fully accessible and promote children and young people's participation in their learning. Teachers are beginning to develop their approaches to how children access their learning through play.
- Most children and young people engage in lessons that are appropriately paced and suitably challenging. However, in a few instances, teachers do not link the purpose of learning activities to individual learning outcomes. Teachers need to ensure that planned experiences are more explicitly connected to intended learning. They should ensure that children and young people's learning build more effectively on what learners' prior knowledge. Teachers should consider reviewing how the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI) aligns with the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This should help provide greater clarity of what teachers want children and young people to learn and achieve.
- In most lessons, teachers use questioning well to promote engagement, using a balance of open and closed questions tailored to individual needs. In the majority of lessons, staff make timely and appropriate interventions to support engagement. However, in a few lessons,

teachers take too long to transition between learning activities. This can result in unplanned periods where children are waiting on their next task. Staff should ensure that all tasks are set at the right level of difficulty and transitions are planned for carefully.

- Staff recognise and celebrate well all learners' achievements, whether big or small, across the school community. Staff promote a culture of celebrating success in ways that are meaningful to children and young people. This helps to build learners confidence and reinforce their sense of belonging. As a result, children and young people are motivated to engage positively in their learning experiences. Staff ensure that celebrations are personalised and inclusive. They make sure that every child and young person feels valued and acknowledged for their efforts and progress.
- Most teachers use formative and summative assessments well in the broad general education (BGE) to measure learners' progress. They use national milestones and CfE national Benchmarks to assess progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers meet frequently with support staff to assess and review observations on children and young people's progress. This collaborative approach is effective in ensuring that assessment is an ongoing process. Senior leaders plan to continue with these partnerships and have identified the need to strengthen further consistency in assessment approaches across the staff team.
- Teachers delivering National Qualifications in the senior phase have a good understanding of the assessment standards required. Staff take part in a moderation cluster group with other special schools where they share assessment approaches and review evidence. Staff have developed appropriate systems to ensure that assessment judgements that they use in the school are consistent with national standards. Staff should consider how they can develop further their approaches to assessment in the senior phase to increase certification across the curriculum.
- Children and young people who transition into the school undergo a baseline assessment to identify the impact of their visual impairment on learning. Teachers and support staff collaborate well with health and social care partners, using a framework for the visually impaired. This provides all staff with valuable information regarding each learner's strengths, abilities and additional support needs. Staff record how children and young people are developing appropriate independence, communication, sensory, orientation and mobility skills effectively. Teachers and senior leaders then take part in regular and productive professional dialogue to review the results of these assessments and plan next steps in learning.
- Staff across the school plan well across different timescales. They develop plans following discussion at team around the child (TAC) meetings. These meetings involve teaching and support staff and allied health professionals, such as therapy teams, educational psychologists and habilitation specialists. At TAC meetings, staff collate information from across the school team effectively to create comprehensive individualised education plans (IEPs) for each learner. Senior leaders share IEPs with learners, parents and other professionals at annual education review meetings. Teachers use IEP targets effectively to inform termly curricular forward plans and develop short term targets for each learner. Staff also use a four contexts of learning planner to plan wider experiences that are beneficial for children and young people. As a next step, senior leaders need to review the quality of the targets created in forward plans and in the four contexts of learning planners. They should ensure that staff are clearer on how planning documents connect with a stronger focus on what learners are expected to achieve.
- Senior leaders and teachers track and monitor children and young people's progress satisfactorily during bi-annual attainment and progress meetings. They check and review learners progress in IEPs, forward plans and the four contexts of learning planners. At present, senior leaders are monitoring the progress of individual learners. They now need to develop

further an overview at a class and whole school level. Staff could then use this information better to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to improve outcomes for all learners.

- Across the school there are a few learners whose progress and development is very restricted as a result of their complex learning needs. Senior leaders are beginning to develop approaches to monitor and review progress using small but significant steps in learning. Staff are working together well to develop consistency and ensure that they have a shared understanding of standards when tracking progress. Senior leaders should continue to develop learner journey profiles to track the progress that children and young people are making over time more fully.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and Board of Trustees.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

- Overall, the attainment in both literacy and English, and in numeracy and mathematics is good. All children and young people require significant individualised levels of additional support with their learning.

Literacy and English

- Most children and young people are making good progress in literacy, working within the milestones through to CfE second level. Staff take good account of learners' age and additional support needs when planning and assessing progress.

Listening and Talking

- Communication is a key strength of the school. Almost all learners communicate effectively with staff and peers using various methods suited to their needs. They make good progress in social communication, with foundation-level learners responding well to sensory stimuli, and milestones level children listening to stories and taking turns. At first and second levels, learners express needs, share ideas, and respond to questions meaningfully. Staff should continue enhancing communication supports, especially for those at earlier developmental stages.

Reading

- Children and young people access reading and texts through strategies tailored to their individual needs, including being read to, using alternative and augmentative communication devices (AAC) and sight recognition. A minority of learners use Braille. Learners engage well with texts that reflect their interests and benefit from regular community library visits. They use visual supports effectively to aid comprehension and recall. Staff should build on these approaches to ensure all learners can access and enjoy reading in meaningful ways.

Writing

- Children and young people at all levels write for a range of purposes and audiences, supported through scribing, AAC, and digital technologies. Some learners write about themselves, their interests, and their experiences. Teachers should continue to develop opportunities for self-expression through writing, ensuring that supports are matched well to learners' individual needs and stages of development.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Staff work well together to provide children and young people with opportunities to develop their numeracy and mathematics skills in school and in the community, appropriate to their individual need. As a result, most learners are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children in the BGE are working at foundation milestones and up to first level of CfE in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Children and young people develop number awareness well across varied contexts. Staff coordinate sensory and practical learning experiences effectively, extending classroom learning into the community. At foundation level, learners respond consistently to songs which help them predict routines. At milestone level, they explore numbers and quantities using song and digital devices. Learners at CfE early level count to and back from 20, while those at CfE first level add and subtract money up to £20, consolidating learning through real-life experiences such as shop visits.

Shape, position and movement

- Learners at milestone level improve coordination and fine motor skills through movement and object handling, following simple directions in familiar settings. At CfE early level, they explore shapes and three dimensional objects using their senses. CfE first level learners classify simple shapes. Across early and first levels, children and young people should continue to deepen their understanding of directions and position throughout the curriculum.

Information handling

- At foundation level, learners are beginning to regulate by using sensory stimuli, familiar objects and support from familiar adults. Children and young people at milestone level use signs, symbols and objects well to make choices. At CfE early level, learners use their counting skills to make choices and answer questions. At CfE first level, young people use bar graphs and charts to sort data. A few children and young people should develop further their information handling skills when gathering and displaying data.

Attainment over time (BGE)

- The majority of learners are making good progress over time. Teachers check children and young people's progress effectively through IEPs, regular meetings, and end-of-year reports. These systems help staff to monitor progress closely and ensure that next steps in learning are well informed. A few learners could attain more. Learners work across a wide range of levels, from foundation milestones through to CfE first and second levels.
- Teachers need to develop further their moderation activities. This should help strengthen teachers' tracking and monitoring of small but significant steps in children and young people's learning. This should support teachers to gather and analyse evidence of progress for those learners who remain within the same level for extended periods.

Attainment over time (senior phase)

- Most senior phase learners are making good progress in attainment over time. They attain a good range of National Qualifications and awards at an appropriate level. In recent sessions, young people have attained qualifications from Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework levels one to five. They are gaining certification in subjects such as English, mathematics, computing, music and personal achievement. The school has recently introduced accredited awards in music and personal achievement delivered by external providers. Senior leaders should now aim to increase and broaden certification across the curriculum, ensuring qualifications are available to reflect better learners' progress both in school and the community.
- Most children and young people's attendance at school is consistently at a high level. Almost all periods of significant absence are as a result of children and young people's health needs. The school works well with partners to ensure learners health needs are met well. There are no incidences of exclusion at the school.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Staff place an important focus on helping children and young people to overcome any challenges their visual impairment presents. This results in learners moving around the school campus safely. Children and young people are confident in taking on responsibilities around the school. For example, learners play a lead role in developing the school's sensory garden, including how the school recycles its waste.
- Staff support learner's effectively to access a range of sporting activities throughout the local and wider community. Learners are developing their confidence well around water when learning to kayak or swimming. They are developing their resilient when trying activities new to them such as horse riding.
- Staff use the local community well to help learners develop important independent living skills. As a result, learners move safely around the local community with appropriate levels of support. Taking account of their additional support needs, learners develop their skills well in using public transport. Children and young people acquire important skills in self-advocacy when learning in the local community. They develop their understanding effectively of knowing when to ask for help when they need it. Learners understand how to buy things they need when visiting local shops. All learners are proud when they achieve something new.
- Staff send written notes, photographs or videos showcasing children and young people's achievements to their parents. Parents share evidence of learner's achievements from home in a similar manner. Parents appreciate the school's highly personalised approach to how this information is shared with them. Overall this joined up approach helps learners to develop their independence at home and in the school and local community.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a very good understanding of children and young people's familial background, visual impairment and other additional support needs. A minority of children and families' wellbeing would be significantly adversely affected by a full-time placement away from home. As a result, senior leaders, alongside the TAC, put in place a shared placement between RBS and the child's local mainstream school. For a minority of learners this results in them attending the school on a part-time basis. This equitable arrangement allows these learners to spend time learning alongside their peers in their local mainstream school as well as attending RBS for specialist input. This helps children and young people to maintain close family bonds.
- All young people move onto positive destinations when leaving school including college and supported adult services.
- Senior leaders use pupil equity funding (PEF) to fund drama activities and music therapy for all learners. This supports children and young people to develop their wellbeing. Senior leaders should consider how parents could be more involved in agreeing how PEF is used each year. They should monitor more effectively the impact of PEF. Senior leaders should also consider how well PEF is being used to close the poverty related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

- The school's outreach team provide qualified teacher support for children and young people affected by visual impairment in four local authorities in Scotland.
- The school library is currently under review with plans to change this to a common room space for children and young people to meet and socialise. Children and young people regularly visit the library in the local community.
- All learners receive their full entitlement to physical education.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.