

Royal Cross Primary School

Elswick Road, Ashton-on-Ribble, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 1NT

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Royal Cross continues to be an exceptionally successful school where pupils and staff share a love of learning and pupils achieve outstandingly well.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and health professionals form a highly skilled staff team with a total commitment to ensuring that every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed, whatever their needs and background.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. The teachers of the deaf plan outstanding lessons which enable each and every child to understand new language and new concepts. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress in their reading, writing and mathematical skills from their different starting points. They make similar progress in other subjects.
- Teaching assistants have a high level of knowledge and understanding about the needs of deaf pupils and those with additional disabilities. They contribute highly effectively to pupils' learning and progress, offering as much support as needed but also helping pupils to learn as independently as possible.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. A stimulating curriculum motivates pupils to want to learn, so that they have excellent attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils are happy and confident in this supportive environment which meets their communication needs extremely well. They make great strides in their personal and social development. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and on trips out.
- Children in the early years make an excellent start because the quality of teaching and planning is outstanding. Children begin to develop effective communication from the moment they arrive.
- Partnerships with parents are generally very strong. However, some families have difficulty supporting their child's learning at home or in attending school activities, sometimes because they live a considerable distance from the school.
- The school is exceptionally well led by a very experienced headteacher with excellent support from senior and middle leaders. Leaders, including members of the governing body, together with all staff, share a vision to improve the school continually and raise standards.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes, a group of pupils with sensory needs and sessions delivered by teaching assistants. She carried out joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with senior leaders, members of the governing body, including parent governors, pupils, the teachers and a representative of the local authority. She attended a school council meeting and visited a lunchtime club.
- The inspector took account of the staff questionnaires that were returned and reviewed the school's own survey of parents. There were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to be able to analyse them.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work, at school self-evaluation and improvement-planning and a range of other documentation, including pupils' progress data, attendance information, procedures for safeguarding and behaviour management.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Royal Cross Primary School meets the needs of deaf pupils from across the whole of Lancashire and a small proportion from neighbouring local authorities. The school occasionally admits pupils who have normal hearing, but who benefit from the way in which the school teaches communication.
- A majority of the pupils has hearing impairment plus additional special educational needs.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or education, care and health plans.
- Approximately half the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from families of Pakistani heritage and the large majority of this group speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for funding through the pupil premium is broadly average. Pupil premium is additional government funding the school receives for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for those children looked after by the local authority. The school does not have any looked-after children currently.
- Most children join the school in the early years, but pupils may be admitted at other times. Children in early years attend full time or part time, according to need.
- Royal Cross staff provide support and training to mainstream schools with deaf children on request as part of The Loynes Teaching School Alliance.
- The school holds a number of awards, the most recent being Investors in People (Gold) and Artsmark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to seek ways to help parents to be more involved in their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The very knowledgeable and experienced headteacher and her deputy headteacher provide exceptional leadership to the school. They have ensured that their vision for continual improvement has been sustained since the previous inspection, so that everyone in the school is continually driving standards upwards.
- In this small school, all teachers have multiple responsibilities in a number of areas. They have been supported to develop their middle leadership skills particularly well. They make sure that senior leaders and governors have a clear picture of each pupil's progress in the subjects they lead. Each teacher has analysed pupils' achievements and formulated subject action plans in their area of responsibility, so that continual improvements are made. As a result the school's leaders, including governors, have a clear picture of how well the provision is meeting needs and this helps with the excellent whole-school development-planning.
- The curriculum is very well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well across all subjects. Mathematics and English skills are practised at every opportunity in all subjects. On one afternoon a week, pupils enjoy a 'circus' of activities such as cookery, drama, music, sport and computing. All staff contribute their skills and knowledge to the circus activities to provide a wide range for pupils to choose from to match their own interests and abilities.
- Strong relationships between pupils and with staff ensure pupils' emotional and physical well-being in school. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and supported, while independent learning is encouraged as much as possible. The school is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils to succeed as well as they possibly can. Pupils say there is no bullying or discriminatory behaviour.
- Additional funding, including the pupil premium, is used very effectively to ensure that there are no gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others. The funding has provided a Saturday club for families with deaf children in the school, transport to attend after-school activities, technology aids for use both in school and at home and additional support for eligible pupils who need it.
- Primary sport funding has increased pupil participation in sport, improved physical education and fitness equipment, and bought in specialist coaching.
- Senior leaders check on the work of teachers and teaching assistants regularly, sometimes with support from the local authority or other external advisers. There is a close link between the quality of teaching and pay increases. A programme of professional development is linked closely to school development planning.
- The school's arrangements to safeguard its pupils are firmly in place and staff receive regular update training.
- Staff liaise extremely well with parents through home-school books and telephone calls. Parents say they feel well informed about what their children are learning and feel well supported by the school. However, leaders are aware that there are a small number of families who are less involved and they are seeking ways to improve this.
- Strong partnerships with other agencies ensure that all of a pupil's needs are met as well as possible. In particular, the partnership work with the speech and language therapist promotes pupils' speech development and ensures that communication needs are met in the best way for each pupil. The school has trained a member of its own staff to contribute very effective assistance for speech and language therapy.
- The local authority provides light-touch support to this outstanding school and the special needs adviser makes regular visits to check on the quality of the provision. The school is able to provide a limited amount of support and training at their request to other schools and settings which have deaf children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been changes to the membership of the governing body since the previous school inspection and a training programme was established to develop skills and knowledge. Governors, including parent governors, have a very secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Governors make frequent visits into school and are highly committed to ensuring that leaders are held to account for pupils' successful achievements. They have a good understanding of school performance data.
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and ensure that pay progression is linked to good and outstanding practice. They monitor the spending of additional funding

to be sure it is closing gaps for disadvantaged pupils and they have agreed to refurbish the playground equipment with the primary sport funding.

- Members of the governing body undertake health and safety walks regularly and make sure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Members make sure that the curriculum is building tolerance, teaching modern British values and preparing pupils exceptionally well for their future lives.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In this very happy school, pupils love to learn and attitudes to work and play are highly positive.
- Lunch and break times provide opportunities to develop pupils' social skills and establish friendships. Pupils enjoy the very stimulating outdoor environment with a wide range of play and fitness equipment, although football is often the favourite game.
- Almost all of the pupils are given opportunities to take on responsibility for themselves and others. During the inspection, members of the school council were considering how they could raise funds on Red Nose Day for a school for the deaf in Nepal which they have been studying. Older pupils thoroughly enjoy helping younger children to take coats off and settle into the classroom when they arrive at school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well across the curriculum. Pupils learn to be proud British citizens and to appreciate modern British values and link these to projects on racism, faiths and other cultures. They develop a good sense of 'belonging' to the deaf community, to the school and wider community. The school has links with other mainstream schools to provide opportunities for Royal Cross pupils to learn and play alongside hearing children.
- Pupils celebrate each other's achievements in assemblies and in lessons. For example, in a topic lesson on hot and cold countries, pupils spontaneously applauded correct choices made by other, more disabled pupils, about the clothes they would pack for hot and cold holidays.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in school 'because we are all friends', but know staff will deal with any concerns.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The atmosphere in school is an exceptionally happy one where pupils can grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- A lot of work is done to help pupils understand how to make strong, trusting relationships while being careful, for example, on social networks. The school spent a whole week, rather than just a day, on e-safety and cyber-bullying because of the vulnerability of its pupils. Parents are involved and informed as much as possible on how to keep their children safe on the Internet.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection. Staff enjoy close relationships with families to support attendance and any absences are usually due to medical conditions or hospital appointments.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Royal Cross has a team of exceptionally gifted and skilful teachers of the deaf and teaching assistants. In this small school they know their pupils really well and plan work which is at the correct level, so that pupils of all abilities make the best progress they can.
- Teachers plan practical and visual work, especially in mathematics, science and topic lessons, to ensure excellent learning for pupils who have difficulty with abstract concepts and slower acquisition of technical and scientific language.
- They plan activities and tasks imaginatively to help pupils understand the practical application of mathematics and science skills. For instance, lessons on time, counting money for shopping and seeing the effect of power in our homes provide life skills which pupils are taught in imaginative and practical ways. In a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, pupils linked estimating to physical education skills – how many times did they estimate they could throw a bean bag into a net or skip through a rope?
- Teachers provide pupils with reading, writing and computing tasks in all subjects to extend literacy skills and develop communication further.
- Teachers plan sensory activities for those pupils with the most complex needs. For example in a Key Stage

1 lesson, pupils looked at, smelled, touched and tasted different fruits and were then encouraged to show preferences. This meant some pupils tried new foods they had previously refused.

- Staff across the whole school are highly skilled at developing pupils' communication. They use speech and sign together consistently, including at breaks and lunchtimes, and symbols support learning for those pupils who need visual prompts and reminders. Staff ensure that pupils use hearing aids and cochlear implants at all times and carry out daily checks to ensure that they are working efficiently.
- Pupils demonstrate huge enjoyment in their lessons. Teachers use praise appropriately and meaningfully and pupils are encouraged to stay on task and apply themselves. They do this willingly because teachers make their work fun.
- Marking of their work helps pupils to know how to improve their work and what their next steps will be. Older pupils are able to say what their targets are and are encouraged to contribute to them.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- All pupils make significant and sustained progress in English, mathematics, science and computing. More than half of pupils make better than expected progress in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 and in mathematics at Key Stage 2. Progress is often connected to the rate at which pupils gain communication and language skills.
- Children make rapid progress in all areas of their development from low and sometimes very low starting points when they join the school, because they quickly develop early language and communication skills in the exceptional early years provision. Those pupils who join the school at later stages, sometimes with very little language, receive intensive therapy and individual support, so that they quickly begin to catch up.
- The school's work in developing communication is fundamental to all aspects of pupils' learning. Once pupils establish an effective communication system, in speech, sign or through the use of symbols, they are able to take off and make outstanding progress, although this is inevitably usually at a slower rate than for normally hearing children.
- A large majority of pupils have additional barriers to learning but their achievement is equally outstanding. Work is matched to individual needs exceptionally well, so that all pupils can quickly build on their learning.
- From the early years, pupils develop a love of books. During the inspection almost all pupils went to a World Book Day celebration at the local football club. Pupils take books home and use technology to support reading and homework, developing good computing as well as good reading skills.
- The school introduced a speech, language and writing programme two years ago to improve sentence writing for pupils of all abilities. As a result, attainment has improved significantly over time. The most-able pupils are able to write complex sentences and use grammar correctly and this prepares them extremely well for the next stage in their education.
- Once pupils have grasped the language of mathematics and science they are able to make good and outstanding progress in the very practical and visual lessons which are well matched to pupils' ability and needs. For example, in a Key Stage 2 science lesson, most pupils were identifying which objects worked on battery and which on mains power, while the most able learned how to wire a plug, name its parts and understand how it worked.
- Disadvantaged pupils make just as good progress as other pupils and sometimes perform better, because the pupil premium is used very effectively to support their learning and their participation in after-school activities. There are too few pupils to enable meaningful comparisons to be made between the performance of disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally. The large proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language achieve equally well.
- The most-able pupils are provided with challenging work to ensure that they attain the highest levels they can and sometimes those levels typical for hearing pupils of their age.
- Teachers and teaching assistants frequently discuss and assess pupils' progress and use this information to identify any pupil who is making less than expected progress, so that action can be taken.
- Pupils make huge strides in their personal and social development. They enjoy strong relationships with staff, so that they feel confident to try new things. This is supported by all staff using speech, sign and symbols consistently to assist pupils' learning.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy physical activity. Many of them attend the lunchtime sports clubs and enjoy the lessons with a specialist teacher bought in through the primary sport funding. In a combined early years and Key Stage 1 lesson, children learned to work as teams, collecting bean bags and dropping them into hoops. All Key Stage 2 pupils enjoy an intensive period of swimming, so that most are independent

swimmers by the time they leave the school.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children entering the early years provision make an exceptional start to their schooling. They join the school with skills which are below or well below what is typical for their age, especially in the areas of communication and personal, social development.
- Communication skills are quickly established, usually through the combined use of speech and sign, but with a multi-sensory approach matched to the needs and abilities of individual children. This makes sure they can learn to express themselves and take part in the adult-led sessions.
- The quality of teaching in early years is outstanding. The teacher is a specialist leader in education and leads the early years provision exceptionally well. Tasks and activities are planned which are exciting and stimulating. The children's enjoyment is very evident and children behave exceptionally well. Their progress in small steps is checked on regularly and school data demonstrate the rapid progress they make after joining the school.
- There is a well-judged balance between allowing children to explore and play by themselves, alongside or with one another, while also providing the necessary language to build learning.
- Children make an excellent start to their reading and writing. They enjoy books which the teacher adapts to match their language levels and children begin to recognise the written names of characters and objects in their stories. They mark-make and begin to write recognisable letters and occasionally are able to write their own names and those of their friends.
- The staff develop the children's early mathematical skills through counting rhymes, counting activities and playing with number blocks.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are promoted extremely well in structured snack times and through exploring feelings in stories. For example, children listened, watched avidly and joined in a sensory story about sharing and making friends.
- Children thoroughly enjoy their time in early years and make huge progress, so that they are prepared exceptionally well to move into Key Stage 1.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133688
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	448942

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Proctor
Headteacher	Ruth Bonney
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2011
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