

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Inspection report for residential special school

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education is a non-maintained residential special school. The age range of young people attending the academy is four to 24 years. Currently 83 young people are boarding. The academy is divided into two areas, college and school. The college area provides education and residential accommodation for older students who board during term time. The school area provides education and residential accommodation for younger students who board weekly. A small number of young people attend the academy as day students. All areas are located on one site. Young people all have single rooms. There are baths, showers and toilet facilities in all residential areas. Older students have the use of kitchenettes. There are communal recreational areas. The academy is located on a large site and has provision for outdoor activities. The academy has plans to rebuild, with an expected date of completion by 2011.

Summary

This was an announced inspection carried out by two inspectors. The purpose has been to undertake a key inspection looking at all National Minimum Standards (NMS). Additionally the focus has been to look at progress in relation to recommendations made following the last inspection. Young people are happy and well looked after at the academy. Staff are competent, caring and professional. The academy has recently undergone a complete restructure of management arrangements. The management of these changes has been handled in a very open transparent manner. The welfare of young people has remained a priority for all staff at what ever level. Whilst the commitment of all staff is evident there are a number of shortfalls in relation to recruitment procedures, staff training, record keeping, health and safety, monitoring of records and the formal supervision of ancillary staff.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection a recommendation was made that the academy should ensure that CRB checks are taken up and cleared for all new staff. Current arrangements are for new staff to have CRB checks taken up on the day of interview. Staff have continued to shadow experienced staff before CRB clearance has been received. The Chief Executive said that in future staff will only undertake an induction prior to CRB clearance and will not work directly with young people. A further recommendation was that water outlets are temperature controlled. The academy has risk assessed this area and temperature control devices are being installed. It was recommended that the academy retain a record of complaints. A record of any complaints made is now held. The record demonstrates a timely response to concerns. A recommendation was made to ensure that fire exits are kept clear and doors not wedged open. Fire exits are now clear, however, one door wedge was in use in one independence area. The academy has fitted suitable mechanisms to a number of doors. These doors now close automatically in the event of fire.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The health and wellbeing of young people in the school is actively promoted. There are systems in place for the administration, recording and storage of medication. Current systems do not provide a clear audit trail of medicines held. Staff, including the Head of Care have not received formalised training in administering medicines. Where staff receive training in invasive procedures, competence is not signed off by the trainer. The Head of Care reported that she will actively seek formalised training for the administration of medicines. Accidents are recorded and staff receive first aid training. Young people are provided with a varied and nutritious diet. Meals are well organised sociable occasions. Older students are involved in preparing their own food. Food stored in the residential areas for independent students is not all wrapped and date labelled. Younger students are given support to ensure that individual dietary needs are met. Staff offer this support in a sensitive, caring manner. Young people have mixed views on the diet they receive. The majority report that it is wholesome.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

There are policies, systems and procedures in place to promote the safety and wellbeing of young people. Some aspects of provision do not fully safeguard young people. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of the need to combine a high degree of monitoring with respect for young people. Where young people are woken in the mornings this is handled thoughtfully. Staff arrange an agreed time for older students to be woken up and avoid walking into rooms in an intrusive manner. Staff are aware of the need to store files and records safely in order to promote confidentiality. The majority of young people use mobile telephones and can communicate with their families by text or e mail. Telephones with minicomms are available in relatively private areas. There is no room search policy. Young people feel able to talk to staff if they are unhappy or have a complaint. They feel that any issues raised are addressed. The school has a complaints policy. Formal complaints are responded to promptly and a complaints log is held. Senior staff are aware of their responsibilities in protecting young people from abuse. Concerns are responded to appropriately. A number of staff have not received child protection training for sometime. Staff spoken to understand their responsibilities in reporting any concerns appropriately. The school holds an anti bullying policy. Young people in general do not feel bullied. Those spoken to expressed the view that they can talk to staff if they have a concern. Young people report that staff listen to them and take steps to address any issues. Where bullying had been a problem, records demonstrate that appropriate action has been taken. Senior managers at the school understand their responsibilities in reporting significant events. There have been no recent incidents of young people having been absent without authority. Staff understand the need to report such incidents. There are no written policy guidelines held. Young people at the school are happy and relaxed. Staff offer encouragement and praise positive behaviours and achievement. Young people have the opportunity to achieve success by being nominated 'pupil of the week.' Young people are also rewarded by being given vouchers to spend. The academy operates a programme of non-aggressive physical and psychological intervention. This is used in response to any potentially challenging behaviours. The philosophy underpinning this scheme is to put a good deal of emphasis on de-escalating difficult situations. Physical intervention is used as a last resort. Any such incidents are recorded on incidents sheets. Physical intervention and sanctions records are not entered on hard bound books that comply with National Minimum Standards 10. The Head of Care reports that behaviour management plans are currently under review. A designated person takes lead responsibility for checking safety and maintenance at the academy. Records demonstrate checks and maintenance by external contractors. A fire risk assessment had been carried out in 2007. It

was reported that a further risk assessment has been arranged for February 2008. Fire safety appliances are checked every week. It was reported that recent records have been lost. A new fire safety log book has been started. Young people and staff report frequent fire drills. Additional fire safety devices include strobe lights. Some young people report that these lights are not sufficient to rouse them in the event of a fire at night. The Chief Executive said that this area will be reviewed and additional alarms, such as vibrating pillows will be purchased. There are individual and activity risk assessments held. There are no environmental risk assessments in place. Staff recruitment records follow some of the elements listed under NMS 27.2. Contact has not been made with each previous employer involving work with children or vulnerable adults, references had not been verified and some staff had started before CRB clearance. It was reported that new staff had not been left alone with young people prior to CRB clearance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from the care and support that they receive at the academy. They are encouraged to maximize their potential and to try out new experiences. The academy operates a 24 hour curriculum. This takes into account the social and emotional development of young people as well as their academic achievement. Care staff support young people in preparing for school. Young people are encouraged to eat breakfast. Liaison between care and education staff is good. Each young person has a key worker who contributes to annual education reviews. Key workers and tutors are working together in the development of behaviour management plans. Young people benefit from a wide range of onsite activities. These include a school swimming pool, pool tables, games, televisions, a video room and a good variety of board games. Some of the school areas can be accessed in the evenings. One example is where a small number of young people can do some cooking. There are outdoors facilities which include play equipment and a tennis court. Young people 14 years of age and above, can leave the site with parental permission. This is dependent on the ability to be safe and to stick to ground rules, such as going out in pairs. Some young people (older students) felt the rules were too restrictive. These students also want to go further afield at weekends. Young people at the academy are offered a high level of support. Staff observed and spoken to had a thorough knowledge of young people's individual needs. Key workers have regular contact with families and significant others. The school has progressed the development of staff signing ability. All new staff have to make a commitment to learning up to level two 'British Sign Language' (BSL). Additionally, the academy is now providing training to level three BSL. A range of specialist staff work in the school. These include speech and language specialist, physiotherapist and a newly appointed psychologist. Additionally, the academy has easy access to an onsite agency which supplies BSL interpreters.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from living in an environment where their views are valued and taken into account. Those spoken to feel that they can have their say and that they are listened to. Formal arrangements to get the views of students and families include student council meetings and stakeholders surveys. Families feel that generally communication between school and home is good. A minority view from parents is that telephone calls could be responded to more quickly. One of the changes made due to student opinion has been the introduction of a black uniform.

Young people's relationships with staff are excellent. They report liking staff and feel well looked after. Staff observed are caring, professional and very aware of individual needs. Relationships between young people and staff are mutually respectful. Staff are well motivated and committed to providing the best possible care. The atmosphere is relaxed and cheerful with a good deal of humour in place. Boundaries are put in place sensitively. Admissions to the academy are carefully planned. Policies are held and young people are introduced in a phased manner at a pace that they can individually cope with. This process includes short visits and introductory stays. Parents can be accommodated nearby when young people have their first overnight stay. Planning for moving on from the academy begins during year nine. Leavers are all interviewed by a 'Connexions' advisor. The Chief Executive spoke of new initiatives being developed to support young people when they move on from the academy. Young people have care records, education files, health care records and admission information held by the academy's administration staff. These records vary in substance and content. The current case files held in residential areas do not hold all the information listed under NMS 17. The Head of Care said that the current documentation is under review. She reported that health needs, behaviour management and individual risk assessments will in future be incorporated into one placement plan. The degree of contact with parents is good. The school residential area uses a home/school notebook to pass on relevant information. Young people who have mobile telephones use text messages to contact families and significant others. A telephone with a minicim is also available.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The academy benefits young people by providing a wide range of facilities and services to meet the economic needs of a mixed age range of young people. Young people attending the academy wear a smart uniform. Personal clothing can be worn after school. Laundry arrangements are good. Older students, supported by staff take responsibility for their own washing. Young people in the college area (older students) are accommodated in various living areas according to age and ability to live independently. Some areas have staff sleeping in arrangements in place and offer a level of support. Other areas provide accommodation for students to live independently with minimal support. Transitional arrangements are dependent both on age and ability. Some of the older students have additional requirements and need help in meeting physical needs. The academy has developed good links into the wider community. There are also reciprocal arrangements in place whereby hearing students use the academy facilities to undertake vocational studies, such as a motor project. Older students, supported by staff prepare their own evening meal. There are agreed plans for the academy to be rebuilt. The anticipated timescale for completion is 2011. It is pleasing to note that despite the fact that there will be completely new facilities a continued programme of maintenance, repair and update is still in operation. This ensures that young people currently accommodated benefit from comfortable living arrangements. There is some disparity between the many living areas at the academy. Some areas are updated, homely and attractive. Some are showing signs of wear and tear. In general the school, the grounds and the larger communal areas are well maintained, clean and nicely personalised. Some young people report that bedrooms are cold and water murky looking. The Chief Executive said that these problems will be looked into. There are sufficient bathroom and toilet facilities. Some facilities do not have locks on doors.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The academy is going through organisational change and restructure with a number of further developments planned for the future. The Chief Executive has been in post for 18 months. One of the changes planned is a complete rebuild of the existing premises and increasing links within the wider community. The Chief Executive and senior management team are committed and well motivated. The leadership provided is far thinking and inclusive. Staff report being fully informed of the changes taking place. Young people benefit from the creative leadership in place. Their views are fully considered with their wellbeing and progress held at the forefront of planning, changes and new initiatives. The academy's 'Statement of Purpose' is clearly written and attractive setting out the aims of the provision. It is supplemented by a young person's guide. Young people's files contain some of the information as described under NMS 18. The Head of Care said that she is reviewing current care records and that in the future they will hold all the information listed under this standard. The school maintains records for staff and young people. These include staff personnel files, accidents records, young people's records, menus and registers. Some information is held electronically. The academy has recently employed a number of new staff and staffing levels are sufficient to meet the individual needs of young people. Staffing arrangements provide consistency. The use of agency staff is rare. There is no risk assessment in place in areas where a single member of staff is on 'sleep in' duties. New staff receive an induction programme which includes child protection, health and safety and first aid. All staff are expected to undertake BSL training. Some staff have never received formal fire safety training and others had not received child protection training for a number of years. Training to meet medical needs is delivered by nurses from the health centre. Staff at the academy generally feel well supported and able to approach senior staff should they have a concern. Formal supervision is given to care staff. Ancillary staff, though supported by line managers do not receive supervision. Care staff have regular meetings which are recorded. The staff at the academy are competent, caring and professional. The Head of Care though experienced has not undertaken NVQ Level 4. She said that she intends to take the award. The percentage of staff achieving the Level 3 NVQ award is reduced due to the recent employment of new staff. Senior managers said there is continued commitment to ensuring that staff undertake the award. There is evidence that the service provided to young people is under review and re development. The Head of Care reports looking at incidents sheets and other academy records. Records, as listed under NMS 32.2 had not been signed by a senior member of staff. The governing body of the academy are actively involved. Visits had been made and reports devised.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that all elements of this standard are followed. Policy guidance should underpin practice and staff should receive training/guidance in the administration of medicines.

Consents for the administration of medicines and emergency first aid should be obtained from those with parental responsibility.(NMS 14)

- ensure that students who live independently understand safe food handling principles.(NMS 15)
- ensure that a policy and procedure is in place for reporting absence without authority.(NMS 8)
- ensure that incidents necessitating the use of physical intervention are recorded in a bound and numbered book, records should include all the elements of NMS 10.14. Where sanctions are given ensure that these are recorded in a bound and numbered book in line with NMS 10.9.(NMS 10)
- ensure that there is a review of current health and safety measures that includes the development of an environmental risk assessment. If necessary obtain additional smoke/fire detection devices.(NMS 26)
- ensure that the system for recruiting new staff includes all the elements listed under NMS 27.2.(NMS 27)
- ensure that each young person has a written placement plan that contains all the elements of NMS 17.5.(NMS 17)
- ensure that all toilets, showers and bathrooms are in good working order, offering hand washing facilities and privacy.(NMS 25)
- ensure that all staff receive training that includes fire safety and child protection. Staff should have access to refresher training at regular intervals.(NMS 29)
- ensure that all staff receive supervision in line with NMS 30.2.(NMS 30)
- ensure that records are monitored and signed in line with NMS 32.2.(NMS 32)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.