

Royal School for the Deaf Derby

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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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

The Royal School for the Deaf, Derby was founded over 100 years ago. It is a non-maintained special school providing primary and secondary education to deaf children and young people as well as a post-16 department. The school has a language and communication policy giving equal status to the British Sign Language and English. Nearly half the staff team are deaf, ensuring a signing community. At the time of this inspection there were 127 students on roll, of which 57 students were boarding at the school for part or all of the week, the school being closed at weekends.

The school is situated close to Derby city centre. It is within easy walking distance to the city centre making easy access to shops, leisure and educational facilities, religious establishments, libraries and parks. There are good public transport links to Derby's main bus terminal, and regional and national rail and road links.

At the time of this visit students were accommodated in six houses. Each house has a lounge, kitchen, dining area and sufficient bathrooms and toilets. Houses have single and shared bedrooms. Each house has sleeping-in accommodation for staff and a waking night member of staff.

The school has a multi-disciplinary approach and provides specialist support to ensure students' individual needs are met. The school employs a nurse and other specialist staff.

Summary

The inspector visited this school to complete an announced full inspection where all the key standards were inspected.

The staff team are highly qualified, caring, and competent. They are passionate and dedicated to the work that they do and the students. Students are confident and polite. Staff are able to provide excellent care for students and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Individual needs are recognised and plans are in place to address them. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected. There are excellent working relationships on behalf of the student across the school, this ensures that the student's needs are fully met. Consultation with students is embedded in practice. Staff are committed to working in partnership with the students and their families, social workers and external agencies to promote a child-centred approach to care and education. The students are protected by robust recruitment and health and safety procedures. An educational professional said, 'The school provides a well-rounded but specialist education for the young deaf children, many of which have additional and complex needs.'

There are a few minor areas for improvement. One to one supervision is not provided as often as stated in the National Minimum Standards and records of physical intervention still do not include the duration of the restraint as recommended at the previous inspection.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Substantial improvements have been made by this school since the last inspection. These have included improvements to medication procedures and records for safeguarding children. However, records of physical intervention are still not complete. Care planning now includes all the elements of the National Minimum Standards and behaviour management plans are comprehensive. Facilities have been improved with regard to students with physical disabilities and visual impairment.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a high quality provision for health care for all students. All students are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians, either locally to the school or to their home, dependent on parental choice. The school employs a nurse, an audiologist and a speech and language therapist. They also have a close working relationship with other healthcare professionals including occupational therapists and mental health services, most of whom can also use sign language, and visit the school regularly. Each student has a health plan that addresses the needs of students including those arising from cultural needs. Plans are reviewed by a qualified nurse according to need. The nurse plays an active role in supporting the care team with day to day support and meeting their training needs. The school have gained The Healthy Schools Award, which has been recently reviewed and maintained. Work is also being carried out to achieve an enhancement to this award for Adolescent Back Pain Prevention. The school are also promoting innovative practice such as Hand Olympics, which helps children with their fine motor skills.

The safe handling of medication is well managed in this school. The school use very few homely remedies. Staff receive comprehensive training and competency assessments in the safe handling of medication during their induction training and then are reassessed annually. Medication is accurately recorded, received and disposed of appropriately. Controlled drugs are secure and competently managed. Medication cupboards are secure. All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate. Most staff are trained in basic first aid and there are also staff who are qualified in first aid and so there is always a member of staff on duty who is trained to give first aid.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions, where a variety of home cooked healthy food is served in ample quantities. Menus are imaginative and appetising. Students have mixed views about the healthy meals on offer, some would prefer to see more fat on the menu! However, they are given the opportunity to discuss and change menus as well as shop for and cook their own meals. A parent said, 'We have always been impressed with the quality of the food provided in the school, and also the arrangements in residence for children to participate in preparing their own food.' Staff are aware of different dietary needs and plan menus that reflect this. Theme nights are held throughout the year to celebrate festivals from different cultures and beliefs. Staff are dedicated to ensuring healthy meals are served that the students enjoy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The privacy of students is respected by staff. The living arrangements provide space where they can relax and easily find privacy away from others if they wish. Sensitive information is held securely. Students' issues are not discussed openly.

Students know how to make complaints and are confident about doing this. An opportunity exists during the students' house meetings and school and residential council meetings to make complaints. Students also have access to complaints forms and fully understand the complaints procedure. Complaints are taken seriously and resolved where possible. It is clear from observation and discussion that the school's management team is responsive to issues raised by the students and their parents and ensures measures put in place to resolve issues are effectively communicated. All complaints are appropriately, fairly and sensitively responded to.

Students feel safe living at this school. The safety and rights of both staff and students are protected. There are no ongoing safeguarding issues, but recent history shows that any such issues are quickly referred to the appropriate external agencies. A social worker said, 'The school is pro-active and prompt in informing me or duty social workers when there have been any incidents at school.' Staff are familiar with the school's own safeguarding procedures. All staff have received child protection training which forms part of the school's internal core staff training programme. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the school's safeguarding children and whistle blowing procedures. The Principal works closely with social workers for the deaf and the local safeguarding manager. Some students have experienced incidents of bullying but staff are pro-active and responsive to all bullying behaviour. The high staffing levels, vigilance and working practices adopted by the school go some way to reducing opportunities for bullying to occur. For example, staff work with students to develop their understanding of the diversity of their community and the importance of tolerance of others. Discussion with students supported this work takes place. The school has a written procedure for action when students are absent without authority, which staff are familiar with.

Staff view the students positively and there is a relaxed, family atmosphere in the houses. Staff are given training during their induction on physical intervention and this is updated annually. Physical intervention is used as a last resort. There is a minimal amount of physical intervention carried out in this school. However, records do not state the length of time a student is restrained for. Permissible sanctions are clearly stated in the school's policies and procedures but the school also operates a successful reward scheme. Risk assessments are in place for all students, covering their activities and behaviour. Boundaries between staff and students are clear and relationships are excellent.

Recruitment procedures are robust. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure and two satisfactory references.

The school has comprehensive risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire. All staff are given fire safety training during their induction and then annually. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis and at different times of the day. Fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record kept. All health and safety procedures are robust. All visitors sign into and out of the school and must show identification.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for students. There is excellent communication between care and teaching staff. They meet at the beginning and end of each day to provide feedback about each student. Homework club has recently been started to promote learning amongst residential students with support from both teaching and care staff in a structured way, providing a valuable addition to the 24-hour curriculum. Specific educational arrangements are in place for each student who all attend the on site school. Students are working well at the school and look forward to attending. Appropriate educational documentation is held on individual case files. These include individual needs, for example cultural and religious needs. There is a child-centred approach to care and education.

Individual support is detailed in each student's file and observations and discussions with staff and students shows that staff ensure each student's individual needs are met. This includes identifying any religious and cultural needs a student may have. The school have a Disability Equality Scheme in place, which highlights areas of excellent practice such as providing training in the British Sign language (BSL) and deaf awareness, free of charge, to parents, siblings, extended family, professionals and the wider community, such as the local chip shop owner, to challenge barriers that deaf students may experience at home and in the community. Newsletters are provided on DVD in BSL for parents who are deaf. All policies and procedures are provided in BSL on DVD for staff who are deaf.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are able to provide excellent care for students and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Student's files include a comprehensive health care plan, pen picture and targets for the term. Targets are agreed and reviewed each term by students and residential staff. There are good behaviour management plans in place for all students where appropriate.

Staff are pro-active and dedicated to ensuring students maintain contact with parents. They are committed to working in partnership with the students and their families, social workers and external agencies to promote individual care programmes, tailored to the student's needs. A social worker said, 'I have only been involved with this school for a short while but feel school have gone the extra mile to communicate with me.' Parents also said that they well informed.

Admission to residence and leaving is sensitively and comprehensively planned where possible. An educational professional said, 'They link well with the local authority regarding transition planning and changes to family circumstances.'

Consultation with students is embedded in practice. Students were able to tell the inspector about plans for the school which they have been involved in, for example, work to achieve Fair Trade status and fund raising for play equipment. Students are also provided with a budget for each house, with which they decide how to spend themselves. Students have chosen to spend the money on activities and furnishings for the house. House meetings for students are held every week and recorded. Discussions are held about food, bullying, activities, holidays, trips out and complaints. Minutes also evidence diversity and tolerance are regular agenda items. There is also an active school and residential council.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Students live in a homely environment with good quality furnishings. There is an adequate amount of communal space. The students have good facilities. Their bedrooms are highly personalised and they can personalise spaces if they wish and examples of cultural choices are evident. The school is clean, tidy and well maintained. Students value their school and their surroundings.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The statement of purpose is a comprehensive document and is reviewed on an annual basis. It is provided in accessible formats such as BSL on DVD. There are good staffing levels in each of the houses with senior staff on call. All houses are staffed at night. Observations show there is a balance of gender and cultural backgrounds of staff wherever this is possible.

Staff have access to an excellent training programme. They are highly qualified, caring, competent and well supported by each other and the senior management team. They are passionate and dedicated to the work that they do and the students. They said they are well supported with regular staff meetings and termly supervision. However, support is not formally provided as often as stated in the National Minimum Standards.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Students receive an individual service, which is designed to meet their personal needs. All staff have an in-depth knowledge of the students they are working with, ensuring their needs are consistently met. Staff work in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of students. Students said they like their school because they have friends at the school and also signing is very important to them.

The school ensures the quality of care through continuous monitoring and evaluation of the service. All records are signed by senior managers. There are termly visits to the residential houses by the senior management team, the governing body and an independent visitor to observe practice, talk to staff and students, look at records and view the environment. Reports are produced detailing what each house does well and what can be improved. In addition, the Principal and the Head of Care visit each of the houses regularly and ensure they are accessible to both staff and students. The annual development plan sets out the way in which the school wants to develop and how it will be achieved. It also includes a comprehensive development plan for training and professional development. Success is evaluated at the end of each term.

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 records of physical intervention include the duration of the physical intervention (NMS 10.14)
- ensure all staff are provided with one to one supervision as per the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools (NMS 30.2).