

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	David Kidner / Romana Jones
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education 50 Topsham Road EXETER EX2 4NF
Telephone number	01392 267 023
Email	
Registered person	Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education
Head of care	Jonathan Farnhill
Head / Principal	Jonathan Farnhill
Date of last inspection	9 October 2008

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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. 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 bedrooms. 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 relocate in the future.

Summary

This was an announced full inspection and all key standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups were assessed. At the last inspection seven recommendations were made. These have all been met.

The school is very well managed and the Principal and head of care provide clear direction and leadership. All staff spoken with, including ancillary staff, are very committed in ensuring that students receive a high quality service and that the needs of the students are paramount. Staff were observed to be interacting with students in a caring and professional manner and in their preferred method of communication.

The school provides a safe environment and ensures that the individual needs of students are identified and detailed care plans are developed and are regularly reviewed. The school fully promotes equality and diversity.

Children and young people spoken with stated that they love coming to the school and think the staff are fantastic. Ofsted has received very positive comments from parents about the services provided at the school.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the school has made the following improvements. The school now ensures that the bound records of incidents necessitating the use of physical intervention and the use of sanctions include all the elements as listed in national minimum standard 10.14 and national minimum standard 10.9 and records are now monitored and signed to identify any patterns or issues relating to bullying and discriminatory behaviour.

A comprehensive environmental health and safety risk assessment has now been completed and includes the external lighting of the school premises. The school has also developed a comprehensive infection control policy and procedures that includes the handling of soiled items and bodily fluids. The systems used for recruiting staff now include the elements as listed under national minimum standard 27.2.

The school has reviewed the statement of purpose and it now includes details of the admission criteria, the use of bedroom door alarms and a list of staff and their professional qualifications. A written policy has also been developed covering the arrangements for staff supervision.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school clearly identifies the physical, emotional and mental health needs of the children and young people. Individual health care plans are developed identifying how their needs are to be met and these are regularly reviewed. Consents for treatment are obtained. There is on-site access to speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and a clinical psychologist. A GP visits the school weekly and there is access to a community nurse. The school maintains very detailed records of children's appointments with healthcare professionals. Care staff receive first aid training and specialist training from a qualified nurse in stoma care, epilepsy, diabetes and the use of Epi-pen. A written record is kept of significant illnesses, accidents or injuries. There is a sick bay that children and young people will go to if they feel unwell while at school.

There are policies and procedures for the management of medicines. Medicines are kept safe and secure and there is a lockable fridge to store antibiotics and insulin. Records are kept of the fridge temperature. The school maintains medicines administration records; however, it was noted that some recording sheets do not always include if medicines have been refused, the start date and end date of antibiotics and the maximum amount of medication that may be given in a specific period of time. This was discussed with the head of care who agreed to review the format of the medicines recording process in order to make these more robust.

Students are provided with healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. Menus viewed demonstrate that food from other countries is provided and students have a choice at mealtimes including a vegetarian option. There is a salad bar and fresh fruit is available. Students in further education are encouraged and supported to prepare their own snacks and meals at evenings and weekends in order to promote independence. On the whole students state that they like the food provided at the school. However, mixed views were received in relation to the quality of the food provided in the evening in further education. Mealtimes are very well managed and dining rooms are suitable for the number and needs of students and staff dining in them. Adapted cutlery and crockery is provided for students if needed and appropriate support is given at mealtimes. Staff receive training in food hygiene and students who prepare their own meals are encouraged to undertake this training. Kitchen facilities were viewed in residential areas and it was noted that some food was not appropriately labelled and covered and some fridges and freezers were in need of cleaning.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Children and young people are able to make and receive telephone calls and text messages in private and computers have appropriate security systems in place.

The school has a robust complaints policy. Children's complaints are addressed appropriately and the children are kept informed of the progress and outcome of their complaint.

The welfare of children is promoted and children are protected from abuse by robust policies and procedures. The school responds appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Care staff and ancillary staff spoken with demonstrated their awareness of child protection procedures and matters relating to safeguarding. The school has recently established a safeguarding group and all staff receive safeguarding training.

The school is very pro-active in addressing matters relating to bullying. Children's questionnaires and discussions with children confirmed that bullying may occur although the vast majority of children said that they have not been bullied. When bullying has occurred this is dealt with appropriately. The head of care confirmed that the monitoring of episodes of bullying is addressed and is fully reported to the safeguarding committee and student council. Bullying workshops have been identified for all children and young people throughout November 2009.

Any significant events in relation to the protection of children at the school are notified to the appropriate authorities and the school has written guidance in relation to children who are absent without authority.

Children and young people are encouraged to develop appropriate behaviour through encouragement and the development of individual behaviour management guidelines and positive handling plans. Staff are aware of the need to set appropriate boundaries and the importance of a consistent approach in the management of behaviours. Incident forms are completed and records are kept of the sanctions imposed and restraint used. These are closely monitored by the head of care. All staff receive training in the use of de-escalation and restraint.

The school is very pro-active in promoting health and safety and fire safety. The school maintains good records in relation to this and these are easily accessible.

The school's system for recruiting staff who work with children and young people is robust. Staff do not work with children and young people in residential services until a satisfactory enhanced Criminal Record Bureau has been obtained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Care staff are very familiar with the educational needs and progress of children and young people and meet with education staff on a day to day basis. Formal meetings are also arranged between education staff and care staff to promote information sharing and continuity and consistency. Children and young people have access to a variety of resources out of school hours including access to books and educational aids. The school operates a homework club that runs two night a week and a tutor is available for young people most days during the evening.

Children and young people have ample opportunity to engage in a wide variety of leisure, social and recreational activities both within the school and the local and wider community. Children and young people stated that they enjoy activities such as football, swimming, ballet classes, youth club, cinema, walks, air hockey, toys, books, magazines and electronic games. The children have access to a sensory room and well equipped communal areas to meet friends and watch television. Within these areas is access to snacks and drinks.

The school ensures that children and young people receive very individualised support. The school operates the key worker system but children and young people have access to other staff including a counsellor whom they may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. Due to the nature of the service the school fully promotes the use of British sign language (BSL) and is very committed to ensuring that care staff are trained in the use of BSL. Other alternative methods of communication are promoted based on the individual needs of children. The school has a student council and minutes are kept of all meetings that are held.

Relationships between children and staff are based on mutual respect. Care staff were observed to be communicating with children in their preferred method of communication and took time to listen to their views and opinions. Staff were also observed to be managing disagreements between colleagues and children in a very professional manner. Children and young people spoken with spoke very highly of the care staff; some children stated that the staff are 'fantastic'.

The school ensures that admission and leaving processes are planned sensitively. There are very detailed brochures and information on admission and care plans confirmed that the care team make every effort to obtain relevant information from parents and the local authority. The school also holds welcome/open days and overnight visits are arranged if needed. Children spoken with confirmed that they had enjoyed their introductory visit and that it had given them the opportunity to meet and to talk to other students.

Children and young people have their needs thoroughly assessed. The care plans that were viewed were well maintained, easily accessible and contained very detailed information as to how the individual needs of the child were to be met. These are regularly reviewed and amendments made as needed. Young people confirmed that they are actively involved in making decisions about their lives. The school also contributes to statutory reviews.

The school ensures that children and young people are able to maintain contact with their parents and families whilst living away from home. As well as every day facilities such as the use of a telephone and text messaging, children and young people have an excellent video conferencing facility. Students spoke very highly of this facility.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Students are able to purchase personal items and requisites at local shops. Records are kept of all financial transactions relating to the management of young people's monies. It was noted that the records of balances sampled were correct; however, only one staff member signs the transaction sheet. The head of care stated that it is possible for more than one staff signature to support the transaction and that this would make the process more robust.

There are plans to relocate the school in the future. However, the school ensures that any matters relating to health and safety are addressed. There is a planned refurbishment and redecoration programme and the school has recently developed its residential accommodation for more independent living. Most areas of accommodation are furnished in a homely fashion and children and young people have personalised their bedrooms. There are sufficient bathing and toilet facilities for the number of students accommodated at the school and there are adequate facilities for those children and young people who need support with their mobility. Appropriate aids and adaptations are provided to meet individual needs of students.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school has an equality and diversity policy, an accessibility plan, conducts student equality and diversity meetings and has student representation on the health and safety committee and the academy equality and diversity committee. The Principal's academy yearly plan covers matters relating to equality and diversity. The school identifies the cultural and religious needs of children and young people and supports students to access their chosen place of worship. Menus demonstrate that food from other countries are provided and specific religious diets are catered for. Students are supported to access local leisure and community facilities with other local children. Staff receive training in British sign language and other alternative methods of communication. Staff spoken with demonstrated how they promote equality and diversity.

There is a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding students. Students' needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions. However, not all written entries on some records are signed and dated with the name of the signatory. There are adequate records of both the children, young people and staff at the school.

The school's staffing policy ensures that the level of staffing is adequate to meet the needs of the students. Staffing matrices were viewed that demonstrate how staffing is deployed in order to meet various levels of support required. There are appropriate systems in place to cover for staff sickness and absence and appropriate staffing levels are maintained. Continuity and consistency of care is further promoted as the school does not use agency staff. Staff spoken with stated that they feel that they have adequate staff on duty to meet the needs of the students and staffing levels are increased for planned activities as needed.

The school has a detailed induction programme for all newly appointed staff. Staff spoken with were clear about accountability and reporting lines and procedures to be followed in relation to emergencies, health and safety and safeguarding. All staff have access to appropriate training and each staff member has a personal development plan. The school maintains a record of training that has been undertaken by all staff members and all staff receive mandatory training and training specific to their role. All staff receive appropriate levels of supervision and an annual appraisal with records kept. Regular staff meetings are held with minutes kept.

Children and young people receive care from competent staff. The school is committed to ensuring that it has a competent and well qualified workforce. The head of care has appropriate qualifications and experience and senior care staff are qualified and experienced. The school is not currently meeting the 80% ratio for staff qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People; at present the ratio for this is 62%. However, the school has an action plan to address this. Staff rotas have time scheduled for supervision, meetings, handovers, completing records and spending time with children and young people.

The school is very efficiently run. There are robust systems in place for half-termly and termly monitoring with detailed records kept. The school has appointed a head of quality and the Principal has developed a clear and concise academy yearly plan dated September 2009. The governing body of the academy make regular visits to the school and monitors the welfare of the children and young people.

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 the medicines recording sheets include when medicines have been refused, the start date and end date of antibiotics and the maximum amount of medication that may be given in a specific period of time (NMS14)
- ensure that all food that is stored in the fridges and freezers in residential accommodation is appropriately wrapped and labelled, the fridges and freezers are regularly cleaned and review the quality of food that is provided for further education students when preparing their own meals (NMS15)
- ensure that the process for the recording of students' financial transactions are reviewed in order to make the process more robust (NMS16)
- ensure that all written entries on the students' files and other records, are signed and dated and the name of the signatory is clearly identified. (NMS18)