

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Inspection report

Unique reference number:	132001
Name of lead inspector:	Margaret Swift HMI
Last day of inspection:	15 March 2012
Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education 50 Topsham Road Exeter EX2 4NF
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Information about the provider

1. Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (the Academy) comprises a school for pupils aged 5 to 16 and a college for students aged over 16. The Academy is based in Devon on the outskirts of Exeter. The vast majority of the students are profoundly deaf and use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language. Currently, there are 65 students in the college. There are 38 funded by the Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA), 25 by the local authority and two students are funded privately. The inspection focused on the 38 students funded by the YPLA. The Academy offers day and residential placements. There are 12 students attending daily and the other 53 students live in college residential accommodation.

2. The college works with three partner further education (FE) colleges. Some 28 students follow their main programme in one of these colleges and the other 10 follow a Foundation Learning programme in the college. The educational provision for the school and the college is overseen by a chief executive officer (CEO) and Principal.

3. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Exeter College of Further Education
 - Bicton College of Further Education
 - Petroc College of Further Education.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<p>Provision for young students:</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p>	<p>35 full-time students</p>
<p>Provision for adult students:</p> <p>Further education (19+)</p>	<p>40 full-time students</p>

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for students	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

Overall effectiveness

4. The college provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. Those on vocational courses achieve their qualifications and develop good vocational skills. The Foundation Learning programme is new and has yet to be evaluated, but students on the programme are generally making satisfactory progress. However, the progress students make is not always maximised because individual targets set for them are not always sufficiently precise. The college has introduced a new baseline in order to measure students' progress from the start of the programme but has not yet fully evaluated its effectiveness. Students feel safe and contribute well to community activities.
5. In many lessons teachers provide a good range of interesting activities and make good use of technology to interest and motivate the students. The planning for a few lessons is weak and the individual needs of the students are not always identified. In too many lessons more able students are not sufficiently challenged. The good partnerships with three local FE colleges ensure students have access to a wide range of vocational qualifications and training. Good support from communication support workers, tutors and therapeutic staff enable most students to gain the maximum benefit from their courses.
6. The Principal and senior leaders have developed the provision to ensure that students and staff become bilingual and that students' progress and transition are central to everything they do. Governors use their expertise well to challenge the college effectively. Arrangements for improving the quality of the

provision are satisfactory, but the use of data by staff to assess, plan and monitor students' progress needs further development. The college is particularly good at keeping its students safe and provides an inclusive environment. However, staff have not had sufficient training in promoting equality and diversity through the curriculum.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Students' achievement of external qualifications is high, but their planned learning goals have not always been sufficiently challenging. Students pursuing their studies at local colleges make very good progress in vocational skills and personal and social maturity.
- Most students enjoy their learning and make satisfactory progress. The development of language skills is good, but the lack of relevant and precise learning targets makes progress difficult to measure.
- Students develop satisfactory skills for independence. Their awareness of personal safety is well developed and they feel safe. Students develop a strong sense of their place in the world and they actively seek opportunities to contribute to meeting the needs of others in their local community.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers provide a good range of interesting activities and regularly check students' understanding and progress. However, lessons are not planned sufficiently well. In too many lessons the learning needs of students are not identified. In a few lessons teachers are not sufficiently focused on what students are learning.
- The college has worked hard to improve teaching and learning. Staff have had training in identifying aspects of good teaching. While there is evidence of some impact from the training, there is still much to do as many of the weaknesses in teaching and learning identified by college observers were still evident at the time of the inspection.
- The curriculum satisfactorily meets students' needs and interests. Students at intermediate and advanced levels have good access to a broad range of vocational opportunities through the good partnerships with local FE colleges. The Foundation Learning curriculum, delivered in the college, has been redesigned and now offers students a varied programme. However, the effectiveness of the programme is still to be evaluated.
- Partnership arrangements are well developed. The college has a strong presence in the local community and with local schools. The college has built on these good relationships to establish joint courses on its site so that students from other schools and colleges can learn and work alongside their deaf peers.
- The college provides good support for students. Communication support workers and tutors work closely with teachers at local colleges to provide very good support for students. Specialist therapeutic staff use a wide range of

strategies that enable students to engage more effectively with their learning programmes and the hearing community.

- The Principal and senior leaders, supported by the CEO and governors, provide a strong lead in changing the culture so that student progress and bilingual education are at the centre of the curriculum. Progress has been made but it is too early for the new arrangements to be fully evaluated.
- Safeguarding is well promoted throughout the college and staff and students are routinely updated. A member of the governors and a student sit on the college safeguarding committee and incidents and risks are scrutinised. Although agencies are available for advice, the college does not have a personal relations policy.
- The college promotes equalities in relation to deafness well, with a strong focus on enabling students to explore their identity in relation to the deaf and hearing communities. The college does not promote other aspects of equality through the curriculum.
- The quality improvement plan has started to bring about change, particularly with the emphasis on transition planning for all students. However, the changes have not yet had sufficient impact on the provision at the main site. Not all staff use data effectively to plan and monitor all aspects of students' progress.

What does Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that targets set for students are sufficiently precise and challenging so that students meet their full potential.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning at the college by planning more effectively to meet the needs of individual students and ensuring staff focus on what students are learning.
- Evaluate the new curriculum to ensure that it fully meets the needs and interests of the students and leads to meaningful progression.
- Develop a personal relations policy that clearly guides and supports staff in advising students on these issues.
- Ensure that all aspects of equality and diversity are promoted through the curriculum by providing training for staff.
- Support staff to use data more effectively to plan and monitor all aspects of students' progress by sharing good practice.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- the lessons they have at the college and other FE colleges
- having a voice through the student council

- feeling safe and supported
- the opportunities to go outside the college in the evenings and at the weekend.

What students would like to see improved:

- more opportunities for swimming and sailing
- the quality of food
- the quantity of food delivered to the residential accommodation at weekends
- the opportunities for their friends to visit them in the residential accommodation in the evening.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The provision at the partner FE colleges continues to be good. The college has a clear vision and an ambitious strategy for improvement of the main college provision, which is showing early signs of effectiveness. The new leadership team has high expectations of staff and recognises the need for substantial training in order to fulfil its vision. Since the last monitoring visit the accuracy of the college's self-assessment has improved, as has improvement planning, the arrangements for risk assessments and procedures for safer staff recruitment. The college has made a positive start in identifying a baseline from which to measure the progress made by students, but has yet to improve target setting for students and update its equalities policy.

Outcomes for students

Grade 3

8. Those students attending local FE colleges are successful in achieving their qualifications. They make very good progress in developing their vocational skills. Students on foundation courses at the college enjoy their studies, but progress towards their learning goals has been difficult to measure as targets set by teachers are not always sufficiently precise.
9. Students make satisfactory progress to more advanced courses or to courses at a similar level. On average, students progress at least one level over a two-year period. Most students progress onto vocational courses at FE colleges and a few move onto higher education courses. Many students progress into supported living environments appropriate to their needs.
10. The development of students' language skills is good. Students are able to accurately use a wide signing vocabulary and improve their skills in communicating with hearing people. Students following courses in FE colleges communicate effectively with teachers and their peers through well-planned support.
11. Students make satisfactory progress in developing their confidence in diverse learning and social situations. Their awareness of personal safety is well developed and students report that they feel safe in and around the various colleges they visit. Students develop a strong sense of their place in the world and they actively seek opportunities to contribute to meeting the needs of others in their local community.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

12. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers provide a good range of appropriate activities which engage students and help them make good progress. Teachers use questioning effectively to check students'

knowledge and understanding. Information and learning technology is used creatively to increase students' involvement and interest. Teaching assistants provide good support, ensuring students derive the maximum benefit from their lessons.

13. A few lessons are not planned sufficiently well. In these lessons teachers' plans do not provide adequate information about how to meet students' individual needs and do not take sufficient account of students' existing skills or knowledge. In too many lessons more able students are not sufficiently challenged. In some lessons observed by inspectors there was too much teaching to the whole class and it was not clear if all students had made sufficient progress. Teachers did not always allow sufficient time for students to answer questions and moved onto the next activity without checking learning or understanding. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but the college recognises that assessment practice is not consistent.
14. The range of learning opportunities satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of students. The partnerships with three FE colleges provide the majority of students with a broad range of programmes at intermediate and advanced levels. The redesigned foundation level curriculum, which was introduced in September 2011, has yet to be fully evaluated. A satisfactory range of enrichment opportunities is provided for students and all gain valuable work experience during their time at college.
15. Partnership arrangements are good. The college has a strong profile in the community. Students both benefit from, and contribute to, their community involvement. The college has built on these good relationships to establish joint courses on their site so that students from other schools and colleges can learn and work alongside their deaf peers.
16. Care, guidance and support for students are good. College staff work closely with teachers at local colleges to ensure students are fully included in the full range of college activities. Specialist support from therapists, counsellors and student mentors is good. However, care plans and guidance on interventions are not adequately incorporated into programme and lesson planning. Transition planning is comprehensive and provides an effective structure in which students can make informed choices about their future.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

17. The Principal and new senior leadership team, supported by the chief executive officer, provide a strong lead in changing the culture of the provision so that students and staff become bilingual, and students' progress and transition are the main focus of the curriculum. The change of culture has involved staff changes and a significant updating of the curriculum, particularly for those students whose learning takes place at the college. The provision at the local FE colleges continues to be good, but the provision at the college needs further development. The introduction of a new baseline in order to

measure students' progress from the start of the programme has yet to be fully evaluated.

18. Governance is satisfactory. The governors have significant experience of education for deaf young people and bring this expertise to the board. The governors challenge the college effectively and seek more information about matters of concern. Governors have not had training in the Equality Act 2010, although this is planned.
19. The arrangements for safeguarding are good. Staff have extensive training and updating, which includes the Mental Capacity Act (2005). Incident reports are routinely sent to governors, and a student sits on the safeguarding committee. Training for students is ongoing, with extensive use made of external specialists in issues relating to deafness and safety, including e-safety and sexuality. However, the college does not have a personal relations policy to provide guidance about sexual relationships, and not all governors have attended college safeguarding training. Staff are appropriately vetted.
20. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. The college responds effectively to incidents of bullying or harassment, and has policies to protect students from discrimination. Central to its ethos is that students and staff who choose to use BSL as their main means of communication are respected and valued, and that staff and students understand how they can unwittingly discriminate against others. In its promotion of equality and diversity, the college focuses strongly on deafness, with a strong emphasis on enabling students to explore their identity in relation to the deaf and hearing communities. It analyses outcomes by different groups to identify any gaps in performance and currently no significant differences exist. The college collects data on the staffing profile by race, gender and disability and has recently appointed more deaf staff. The college has yet to update its policy in response to the Equality Act 2010 and has yet to train staff in promoting equality and diversity through the curriculum.
21. The college's arrangements to improve the quality of its provision are satisfactory. The college has reviewed its provision as part of its strategy to focus on progression and is developing key performance indicators in relation to its performance. Self-assessment and quality improvement planning are satisfactory. The college has started to develop systems to demonstrate students' progress in the 'softer skills', such as developing skills to help students live independently. Therapists work more effectively with teaching staff to overcome barriers to learning. Not all staff use data effectively to assess, plan and monitor students' progress. Staff have undergone training to improve teaching and learning, but not all teachers plan effectively to meet the learning needs of all the students in their groups. College observers are skilled at identifying what is needed to improve teaching and learning but have been slow in bringing about improvements.

22. The college has satisfactory arrangements to respond to the views of students, parents, partner colleges and employers. The student council has been reconvened with a strong focus on enabling students to have their voices heard, and to plan events and activities, such as involvement in the Olympic Games.

23. Resources are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified. The financial management of the college is satisfactory. The current buildings used by the college are not ideal, but the college is planning to move to a new building by 2014. The outcomes for students are satisfactory and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Information about the inspection

24. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the college's Principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
25. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of students. They also looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled students			
Full-time students	38	1	37
Part-time students			
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for students	3	3	3
How well do students achieve and enjoy their learning?	3		
How well do students attain their learning goals?	3		
How well do students progress?	3		
How well do students improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3		
How safe do students feel?	2		
<i>Are students able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3		
<i>How well do students make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3		
Quality of provision	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for students?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support students receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of students?	2		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for students?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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