

# Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

50 Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4NF

**Inspection dates** 14–15 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school's effectiveness has improved since its previous inspection. Over the last year, with an increased involvement of the governing body, the school is now moving forward at a remarkably rapid rate.
- Students achieve well. They make good progress from their different starting points. New initiatives are dramatically accelerating the progress made by the students involved.
- Students behave well and feel safe. Partnerships with other agencies help them thrive. Relationships between adults and students throughout the school demonstrate high levels of trust, respect and care.
- Teaching is typically good. There is some excellent teaching and learning across the school. The sixth form is good.
- The leadership of the head of school and Executive Board is excellent. Staff have embraced new ideas and ways of working. They make a strong and cohesive team with a shared vision for working towards being an outstanding school.
- Governors know what the school does well, what needs to improve, and how to do it. They have set demanding targets to improve all aspects of the school to the highest level.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding so students do not yet reach the highest levels of achievement. Successful piloted activities have not been 'rolled out' across the school quickly enough.
- The school has not maximised links between visual communications and the written word in the daily life of students.
- Very few students read for pleasure
- Not enough information is shared with parents to help them be fully involved in school life on a daily basis.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half-a-day's notice. It was conducted simultaneously with the inspection of the college provision.
- Inspectors jointly observed 12 lessons with members of the leadership team. During these lessons, students' books and work were scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed students read in lessons.
- The lead inspector undertook a 'learning walk' around the school and visited all classrooms. Students were also observed during breaks between lessons, lunchtime, and at the end of the school day.
- The inspectors held meetings with therapists, subject leaders, members of the governing body, and members of the Executive Board. Discussions were held with students during lessons and with the student school council.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including academy improvement plans, achievement data on students' current progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, and the school's plans for spending the additional sports funding.
- Inspectors took account of the responses of 11 parents to the on-line Parent View questionnaire during the inspection. Inspectors also took account of a recent parental survey conducted by the school and a phone call from a parent.

## Inspection team

Steffi Penny, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fran Ashworth

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (the Academy) is a non-maintained special school for moderate, severe, and profoundly deaf students. The majority of students are learning English as a second language and have delayed use of their first language, British Sign Language (BSL).
- Students come from a range of social, economic and cultural backgrounds, with the large majority being White British. There are more boys than girls. There are currently no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Almost all students are taught on the school premises. Very few attend alternative provision typically at local colleges.
- The proportion of students supported through additional government funding known as the pupil premium is around the national average. The funding provides support for children known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. Only two of the 21 local authorities that fund placements at the Academy forward this funding to the school.
- The Academy comprises a school for students aged five to 16 and a post-16 department. The post-16 department provides a sixth form for students up to the age of 19 and a college for students to age 25. The vast majority of students aged over 16 attend the college. The academy also offers residential and day placements to students. The Academy's college and residential provisions are inspected separately. The reports can be found at [www.Ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk).
- The Academy admits students throughout the year into both primary and secondary provision with the average being 12.
- The additional government grant in Year 7 to provide additional support for students who had failed to reach expected standards at the end of Year 6 applies to all students. Its specific impact cannot therefore be measured.
- Since the previous inspection, the management structure of the academy has been reorganised. It is overseen by an Executive Board that comprises the Chief Executive, head of school, head of quality, head of residential care, head of college, director of finance and resources, and director of fundraising and marketing.
- Plans remain in place for the Academy to relocate to a new site in Exeter in the next couple of years.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement by:
  - encouraging more robustly students reading for pleasure in BSL and English
  - optimising every opportunity for students to link with visual cues in their everyday lives.
- Improve teaching to outstanding levels by:
  - making sure that the successful pilot programmes of support to raise students' achievement are more swiftly employed across the whole school.
- Draw more families into the daily life of the school to support students' learning and achievement by:
  - improving the range and quality of information available to parents
  - more frequently sharing information about what students are doing and using a greater variety of ways to inform them how well they are achieving.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students make good progress and achieve well, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or home circumstances. Overall, students' progress in literacy, communication, language and numeracy is good.
- Those students who have attended the school the longest make the best progress. Previously, some of the lower attaining students in the primary phase were not doing as well as they should. The gaps in their learning are now closing due to stronger teaching and more challenging targets being set for them.
- Students who are taught phonics (the sounds that letters make) make outstanding progress from a wide variety of starting points. The excellent teaching ensures that students are desperate to unlock the enigma of the written word in English.
- Students in Key Stage 4 who are entitled to the pupil premium make better progress than their peers in English, mathematics and science. Although the achievement gap is narrowing, they make less progress compared with their classmates in other subjects.
- Teaching and the support for students in the sixth form is good. As a consequence, students make good progress and are enabled to be ready to continue with their education if they choose.
- When students leave the school, they have a range of accreditation, including at entry level, functional skills and BTEC courses. This year, more students have been entered for GCSE and inspection evidence shows they are on track to reach their targets. By the end of Year 11, students are expected to have achieved a GCSE equivalent accreditation in BSL; most of them do.
- The achievements of the vast majority of students who have been allocated to pilot schemes have 'rocketed' in a very short space of time. The use of electronic devices to support learning in the primary phase is a definitive success. In a literacy lesson, students filmed each other signing their poem and then assessed their performance. The visual review helped them make significant improvements in their signing as they learned to add more body language and facial expression on their second video take.
- In the past, not all of the assessments made when they start were used to set students' targets accurately. Some students should have achieved more. The most able students now make good progress. The school has reviewed all students' targets to ensure that they are achievable, but challenging. The range of available qualifications and accreditations has also been increased.
- The vast majority of students develop mathematical reasoning, fluency, conceptual understanding, and recall through using visual, practical equipment. As a result, they become confident problem-solvers using BSL and English to explain and justify their answers. However, their mathematical capability, including that of the most able students, is not always reflected in their final examination grades.
- Although students learn to communicate and read in BSL and English, they seldom read for pleasure. Leaders have noted this and the school has invested in appropriate reading materials, such as books and some electronic devices. It has not exploited all possible avenues and opportunities to support students to read more widely and frequently.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching and learning are typically good. There is not enough outstanding teaching to kindle outstanding achievement for students. The better teachers are passionate about their subjects. Their enthusiasm inspires students to learn, work hard and to do their very best.
- Where teaching is less effective over time, teachers do not use enough visual clues to explain complex problems and students' progress slows.
- The teaching of phonics is outstanding. In one lesson, students were seen 'practically bouncing'

out of their seats to supply the next sound or put up missing ones on the board. They were delighted to be learning new words and were gaining an impressive grasp of English as an additional language. Many students have increased their 'spelling age' by a year in the last three months.

- All staff that join the school with little or no BSL are expected to learn the language swiftly and to a good level. When making new teaching appointments, the focus has been on employing those people with the best subject knowledge and ability to develop a love of learning in their students. Therefore students' enjoyment, aspiration for further study, and capacity for increased achievement have 'taken off'.
- In lessons where a teacher does not yet have good levels of BSL, a specialist assistant is provided who has high quality signing skills. This assistant signs to students and interprets for the teacher when needed. This ensures smooth communication for everyone during the lesson.
- Teaching assistants are almost always fully involved in helping students to learn. Students reported that the quality of signing is crisp and clear. They told inspectors that they really appreciate this because it helps them to understand what they need to learn, and supports them to improve their own signing.
- Excellent use is made of 'television' style 'information screens' to share information with students and staff. For example, in the dining hall, a member of staff uses BSL to show what is available for lunch, alongside pictures of the various dishes. In the students' common room, the screen is used to share interesting news and local stories. However, there is no/little written English included in the displays. The lack of written English on the 'information screens' is a missed opportunity to link words with the visual image as part of the students' everyday lives.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are taught how to keep safe, including when using mobile phones and the internet. Students say they feel safe.
- There are few incidents of bullying. When reported or discovered, swift action is taken by staff. Students reported that there is less bullying now than in the past. However, some students find it hard to understand the difference between bullying and teasing. These students get frequent helpful reminders, for example from the student mentor, school council and through the curriculum.
- The behaviour of students is good. It is not outstanding because where teaching is weaker, students sometimes 'switch off' in lessons and do not pay enough attention to their work. During recreation times such as lunchtime, students appear relaxed with staff, but also respectful.
- There are clear systems and structures to support each student to manage their own behaviour. For those students who have the most challenging behaviour, there is a good range of specialist support from within the school and from external professionals. Patterns of incidents are carefully monitored to identify possible triggers and remedies. As a result, the amount of physical interventions needed to keep students safe has reduced.
- The school has worked very hard to improve attendance. It is now average. There are good systems in place that have reduced the need for students to leave the school for health or medical appointments. For example, the school employs its own qualified nurse, speech and language therapists, audiologist, occupational therapists, physiotherapist and clinical psychologist.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The school has turned a corner and is now firmly on the trajectory towards being outstanding. The head of school is spearheading change like a 'fantastic firecracker'. He and the leadership team have sparked middle leaders into action. These leaders have been busy, enthusiastically piloting projects such as the new phonics teaching, and ensuring that the therapy teams are

working 'hand-in-glove', instead of separately. These activities and other improvements in the ways that staff work closely together are key reasons that have helped the school's rapid improvement over the last year.

- In the past, time and energy was wasted with the extensive trialling of initiatives and follow-up discussion about them. Project leaders now have the confidence to implement and successfully monitor new programmes of support. The school has recognised that these current and highly successful pilots need to become normal practice throughout the school far sooner than originally planned.
- When students join the school, they are now carefully tested to see what they know, understand and can do. After six weeks, this provides an accurate starting point from which challenging targets are then set. This information is now used to design a programme of learning across a good range of subjects and therapeutic activities that is tailored specifically to the individual student. Each programme also ensures that students' emotional and physical well-being are also effectively supported and strengthened.
- The leadership and management throughout the school are at least good. This includes those of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Sixth Form. Changes to the way that students' progress is checked ensures that any potential dips in progress are spotted early.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for students to take part in activities relating to sports and the arts. There is an annual residential trip for all students, which they say they enjoy.
- Regular training for all staff has helped to create a shared teaching approach which uses visual communication as much as possible. Staff are highly committed to the school and all that it does. There is a shared and relentless drive to help students to have the best possible future. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Providing equal opportunities for the whole school community is a core part of the school's work.
- Excellent relationships exist between staff, students and their families. Most parents keep in close contact with the school. A small minority find it harder to be involved with the life of the school day to day. Some students use visual clips to share daily their learning and triumphs with their families when they take the devices home. Whilst the school has worked hard at involving parents in school life, it has not maximised the potential for sharing information with them.
- The members of the invigorated Executive Board are providing a catalyst for improvement. Members of the Board check the quality of teaching regularly against the Teachers' Standards. They do this through a programme of lesson observations and close monitoring of students' progress. The quality of school assessment has improved. Judgements made by the school's leaders about the quality of teaching and students' achievements are accurate and honest. The use of the sport funding has been carefully planned.
- A culture of driving improvement across the school based on high expectations and ambitious targets has developed. The school has close links with other education providers, agencies and teams. They use their partners to help support students when they need it. They also help moderate the work of the school to ensure accuracy, and so that complacency does not 'slip in'.

#### ■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is very supportive of the school. They know it well because they visit regularly; they are not solely reliant on reports from school leaders. They have taken a more challenging role over the last year, aided and informed by a good range of training. The Executive Board also helps governors to have a good understanding about the quality of teaching and how well students achieve. They use this information and students' progress information to help them determine pay awards to staff. The governors maintain a rigorous check on how the school is using its funds, including the pupil premium, to get best value for money. The school ensures that all those students who are entitled to additional government funding through the pupil premium have it allocated to them. This includes using the school's own funds where needed. The governing body make sure that statutory responsibilities such as safeguarding are met.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113654
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	426711
<b>Type of school</b>	Non-Maintained Special School
<b>School category</b>	Special School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	45
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	2
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	15
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Marge Clarke
<b>Head of School</b>	Keith Stevens
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12–13 October 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 272692
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