

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, 50 Topsham Road, EXETER, EX2 4NF

Inspection dates 14/01/2015 to 16/01/2015

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The school promotes the safety and well being of residential pupils. There are robust policies and procedures in respect of child protection. All residential staff receive safeguarding training and have a good awareness of safeguarding policies and protocols. All residential pupils feel safe at the school.
- The residential provision is well managed. Care and support plans are comprehensive and residential pupils make good progress in personal outcomes through their individual targets. Residential pupils benefit from learning new skills that prepare them for adult life. Residential pupils said that they have learnt new skills such as cooking, cleaning and social skills. They enjoy a wide variety of social, leisure and recreational activities.
- Leaders and managers have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have completed a development plan for the school that includes improvements to the residential provision.
- Areas for improvement include ensuring that the residential pupils' files contain the required information, that the environment is well maintained and all care plans refer to behaviour support plans and risk assessments in respect of behaviour management.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on the morning of the inspection and inspectors arrived at the school later in the morning. Inspectors visited all of the residential provisions in school and college, observed staff interaction, boarding routines, includes evening activities and mealtimes. Inspectors spoke to residential pupils, residential staff, school nurse, head of care, the Principal, a social worker and a school Governor. In addition, they scrutinised a variety of records, documents and policies and procedures. On line surveys from residential pupils were evaluated and feedback given to the Principle and head of care.

Inspection team

David Kidner	Lead social care inspector
Heather Chaplin	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education is a non-maintained, mixed, residential special school and college, which caters for pupils between 4 and 25 years of age who are hearing impaired, with some pupils having additional needs. The main form of communication used is British sign language (BSL). English and Sign Supported English communication is also used.

The academy is situated within the city of Exeter and operates from one site, which is divided into two areas: college and school. Residential accommodation is provided in both settings. Pupils board for five days, seven days or part-time. At the time of this inspection there were 36 residential pupils under the age of 18 years. The last inspection was carried out in January 2014 when the school was judged as adequate overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ensure that care plans include the behaviour management plan and detailed risk assessment to demonstrate that the school does not restrict the liberty of any child as a matter of routine or provides any form of secure accommodation.
- continue to review all accommodation areas to ensure they are decorated and maintained to a good standard, and replace soft furnishings and fittings that are showing signs of wear and tear.
- review the contents of residential pupils files as some contain large amounts of historical records and ensure they contain all the requirements of Appendix 2 of the national minimum standards.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. The vast majority of residential pupils enjoy staying at the provision. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and their peers and make lots of friends. One residential pupil said 'staff are friendly, funny and we have good conversations'. Another said 'it's relaxed here, it's like home'.

Residential pupils behave well and are supported to manage and improve their behaviour. They are encouraged to respect others as individuals and are supportive towards each other. A large number of residential pupils said that they learn new skills including, cooking, cleaning their bedrooms, shopping and using public transport. They understand the importance of developing life skills and are keen to learn.

Residential pupils show good progress in developing self-esteem and emotional resilience. Residential pupils benefit from the use of technology that in turn promotes their engagement, self-esteem and their independence. They are respectful of their peers and learn to value individual differences.

Residential pupils feel well cared for and valued. Their health is promoted and they have access to specialist services to meet their individual needs. Residential pupils are unanimous in that they feel that they are well cared for if they are feeling unwell.

Residential pupils feel listened to and are able to voice their views and opinions. They have access to a wide range of social and leisure opportunities, both within the school and the wider community.

One residential pupil said 'we have loads of trips, we go everywhere, it's relaxing, it's fun and we have friends'.

Residential pupils benefit from good communication between residential and academic staff. This ensures that there is continuity and consistency in the delivery of their care and support needs. Residential pupils are well prepared for further education and adult life, as a result of continuous support and encouragement from staff, leaders and managers.

Deaf young people are well prepared for coping in a hearing world.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of care of residential pupils is good. The school has a robust admissions process. Leaders and managers undertake a thorough assessment of prospective pupils' needs prior to their arrival at the school.

Residential pupils receive good quality individual support and pastoral care. Care plans are comprehensive and reflect their unique needs. Plans are regularly reviewed and are supported with detailed risk assessments. One social worker said 'the care provision is excellent, there is a dedicated staff team that focuses on their individual needs and promotes communication and social skills.' Wherever possible, staff involve residential pupils in the development of their care plans, ensure that they have access to their records and that they take an active part in reviews.

The school has a 24-hour curriculum. Academic and residential staff work well together to promote continuity and consistency of care. There are good working relationships between leaders and managers in the residential provision and in the education provision. This ensures that any areas of concern are addressed immediately, and achievements are celebrated.

There are good arrangements for healthcare and the management of medicines. Care plans clearly identify any specific and specialised individual medical needs, and the action required to promote a healthy lifestyle. Residential pupils have access to outside services and support and are encouraged to take responsibility for their good health and well being. They have access to sports facilities at school and on other sites, and this includes going swimming. This helps to keep them fit and healthy. Young people's heights and weights are recorded to help guide their growth and development. Residential pupils confirm that they alert staff and are well cared for if they are feeling unwell.

Residential pupils benefit from a wide variety of social, leisure and recreational facilities. One residential pupil said 'activities are good; we go to the waterpark and the fair'. Another said 'it's relaxing here too, but it's not a boring relaxed'. Other residential pupils commented that they go shopping, visit cafes and restaurants, go bowling and swimming.

Residential pupils have regular contact with their parents, families and friends. This is supported by access to a variety of social media.

Residential pupils are encouraged and feel able to express their views and opinions. Staff have excellent communication skills. Consequently, residential pupils feel listened to.

Most accommodation areas provide a homely, safe and well-maintained environment. Residential pupils live in age and gender-arranged accommodation. Most choose not to decorate their bedrooms, but others have personalised their rooms with photos and posters. Accommodation areas provide good communal space, with kitchens for the cooking of meals and snacks. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the accommodation including redecoration and refurbishment of bedrooms and some communal areas. However, due to the fabric of the building and the high level of wear and tear, some communal areas and bathing facilities require redecoration and the replacement of soft furnishings. Leaders and managers acknowledge this and have identified this in the school's development plan.

Food is good and plentiful. Most residential pupils are complimentary about the quality of the food provided. Mealtimes are well managed. Many residential pupils are encouraged to develop life skills and in particular, the preparation and the cooking of their meals.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

The safety of residential pupils is good. At the last inspection a recommendation was made to ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of residential pupils. This recommendation has been met. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed safeguarding policies, so that staff are appropriately informed of correct practice. The head of care is the designated lead for child protection and ensures that any concerns are referred to the local authority designated officer. The school learns from safeguarding incidents and documents them clearly

Safeguarding practice is good. All staff receive safeguarding training and demonstrate a good understanding of procedures and protocols. Safety is given a high priority and all residential pupils spoken to said that they feel safe, and are safe.

All residential staff receive training in the school's chosen method of de-escalation and restraint. They are well versed in the residential students' individual needs and known triggers. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort. Staff maintain comprehensive electronic records of all incidents and physical interventions. The head of care monitors and evaluates these and reports her findings to the safety and behaviour committee. Care plans include detailed behaviour

management plans and risk assessments. These are regularly reviewed and updated.

The school governor with lead responsibility for health and safety and safeguarding considers that there are robust systems in place to protect residential pupils.

Some residential pupils occasionally exhibit extreme challenging behaviours, which, if not managed carefully, could put others at significant risk. On one occasion, staff took action to prevent possible harm to others by restricting a residential pupil, supported by their staff team, to their own area of the living accommodation for a short period until the pupil had calmed.

This strategy was a last resort. It was clearly recorded in the care plan and agreed with parents, but was not supported by a comprehensive behaviour support plan, or risk assessment. The head of care took immediate action during the inspection to remedy this situation. She undertook to ensure that this emergency measure is regularly reviewed.

Leaders, managers and residential care staff work in collaboration with parents and placing authorities to support residential pupils' behaviour when they are at home. For example, they liaise with parents to provide practical advice, and assist them in developing strategies that are then used at home. This promotes continuity of care and partnership working. One social worker said 'I have no concerns in the quality of care provided and the management of the young person's behaviours.'

Residential pupils do not report bullying as an issue. One residential student said 'bullying is not allowed'. If they do have any worries or concerns they feel that there are plenty of staff that they can speak to if they so wish. The missing person's policy has been reviewed and now refers to Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols. No residential pupil has been reported missing since the last inspection.

The school has robust policies and procedures for staff recruitment. Staff recruitment files are well ordered. There is a single central register and a file audit system in place to ensure that all checks are complete before staff commence in post. All recently-appointed staff have complete checks in place which helps to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and vulnerable adult students.

The school provides a secure, safe and well-maintained environment. There are effective systems in place to promote health and safety. Residential pupils are aware of fire escape routes and how to respond in an emergency. They take part in regular fire drills. The school has aids and adaptations to promote fire safety. This includes vibrating pillows and flashing lights in bedrooms and flashing lights in communal areas. Leaders and managers ensure that all the school's utilities are regularly serviced and maintained.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the school is good. The school's Statement of Purpose outlines the aims of the residential provision. Leaders and managers have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have completed a detailed and realistic development plan and a comprehensive assessment of its provision. The head of care manages the residential provision very well. Governors undertake regular visits and complete detailed reports to provide effective oversight.

The residential provision is seen as an important part of the school. Leaders and managers, supported by a dedicated and motivated staff team, actively promote deaf young people's rights and offer good individualised support to them.

Leaders and managers have met the identified shortfall in the national minimum standard relating to child protection and two of the three recommendations to further improve practice. As a result, child protection procedures are more robust and all policies and procedures have been reviewed. In addition, the school has improved its record keeping in respect of sanctions and physical intervention. These records are now all electronic and meet the required standard. The third recommended improvement was to replace furnishings and fittings that show signs of wear and tear. This has been partially addressed, but the residential provision continues to require further improvements. Leaders and managers have identified this in the development plan.

There have been improvements in the quality of record keeping. However, some residential pupils' files contain large amounts of historical records. This results in some files being overfull. It is not always clear that they contain all the requirements of Appendix 2 of the national minimum standards.

Leaders and managers seek residential pupils' views regularly. Residential pupils say that they are listened to and consulted.

Leaders and managers also have good relationships with parents and carers. They have recently completed a telephone audit to consult parents about how the school can improve. Following an internal audit of parents' views in Summer 2014, most parents consider that the pupils' residential welfare is good, and that children are safe and happy at the school.

Residential staff receive good quality training and the vast majority are qualified at level 3. They value regular supervision and say that this provides a useful forum for day-to-day support and professional development. Staff and managers value each other and there are positive relationships within the school. This helps to maintain a motivated, committed staff team.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	113654
Social care unique reference number	SC022216
DfE registration number	878/7083

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	36
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mr Keith Stevens
Date of previous boarding inspection	21/01/2014
Telephone number	01392 267 023

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