

# Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

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

## Inspection dates

03/02/2016 to 05/02/2016

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Requires improvement 3**

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision requires improvement because

- The school does not meet six of the national minimum standards for a residential special schools. In addition, three areas that require improvement have been identified.
- The accommodation where young people stay is not maintained to a good standard throughout. Each bedroom is fitted with a door alarm. The use of this restrictive practice is not individually risk assessed. The senior leadership team recognise the weaknesses in the quality of accommodation and plan to relocate the campus to a new purpose built site two miles from the existing location.
- Monitoring by the senior leadership team and governors is not rigorous. They do not sufficiently scrutinise the school practices to identify areas that require improvement.
- The team are not yet providing all young people with good help and protection. One young person's risk assessment does not include all known risks and strategies to reduce them; weaknesses in fire safety was evident in some areas of the residential accommodation, and staff that do not have a high level of sign language skill may talk with young people about potential child protection concerns.
- Young people's views are not actively sought. Residents meetings are infrequent and lack evidence that young people's requests are acted on.

- Some young people's individual identity and cultural needs require increased consideration by staff.
- Overall young people's experience and progress is positive. They benefit from living in an inclusive community where they are understood and can develop their own communications skills. This opportunity has a positive impact on their behaviour, confidence and learning experience.
- Young people have a good relationship with staff and very much enjoy attending the school. Many of them would like to attend more frequently. Young people like taking part in a wide range of activities at the school and in the community.
- The school caters for a diverse group of young people and continually adapts its services to help young people with additional complex needs.

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools

- 5.1 Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for children. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and the findings acted upon to reduce risk for all children. Where children are aged 8 years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls.
- 5.4 Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them.
- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 7.1 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 18.2 The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to residential provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.

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

- Ensure that only staff with sufficient skills in British sign language and safeguarding expertise question young people with regards to child protection concerns.
- Ensure that young people's cultural diversity needs are met, with a suitable variety of food for them to prepare their meals from.
- Ensure that young people's resident meetings occur regularly and that their views

are acted upon.

## Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on the morning of the inspection and inspectors arrived at the school at midday. Inspectors visited all of the residential provisions for young people in school and college. They observed staff interaction and young people's evening routines, activities and mealtimes. Inspectors spoke to young people, residential staff, specialist health professionals, the Chief Executive & Principal, the head of care, the head of school, the head of college, young people's family members and a school Governor. In addition, they scrutinised a variety of electronic records, documents, policies and procedures.

## Inspection team

Guy Mammatt	Lead social care inspector
Janice Hawtin	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. 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. Young people board for five days, seven days or part-time. At the time of this inspection there were 32 young people in residential placements under the age of 18 years. The last inspection was carried out in January 2015 when the school was judged as good overall.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Requires improvement**

The overall experience and progress of young people requires improvement because of weaknesses identified in meeting the national minimum standards for a residential special school. The quality of the living accommodation impacts on young people as their residences are not consistently well maintained. Night time arrangements are not individually risk assessed. As a result, all young people have door alarms fitted to their bedrooms and are therefore, subject to their movements being monitored.

Some young people have specific personal identity and/or cultural needs. One young person said that the choice of food they have to cook their meals with is limited. The provisions available do not take into account the ingredients and flavours which some young people have grown up with.

Young people make good academic and personal progress. They enjoy the residential life and make the most of opportunities to participate in the activities on offer. There is a varied programme of events which reflects the needs and interests of the young people. The young people feel safe, relaxed and make good friendships.

Young people develop good independence skills. Work experience placements and enterprise schemes builds their confidence of interacting in the community and enhances their employment prospects. Young people learn good life skills that help to prepare them for leaving home and having similar opportunities to all other young adults.

Young people are encouraged to build sound relationship with each other, with staff and members of the community. They feel well supported, valued and respect one another. Staff use strategies to manage young people's behaviour which are clearly understood by all and effectively implemented.

There are sufficient numbers of a consistent staff team who communicative effectively with the young people and understand their needs. Staff are well trained and have opportunities to further their professional development.

The school's healthcare facilities are effective in promoting and maintaining young people's health needs. Young people's care plans evidence good links with the health professionals involved.

Staff at the residential provision work in partnership with other elements of the school. Young people move from school to college successfully. Staff allow them time to adjust and explore their new setting. There is regular communication and positive feedback from families and professionals regarding the residential provision.

Young people live in accommodation that requires improvement. It is not maintained to a good standard throughout. Staff do not ensure that as rooms change their use, their fixtures and fittings are updated. For example, some girls do not have a computer in their living area and some bedroom doors had locks on which could be locked from the outside. The external lighting is inadequate for deaf young people who rely on their visual sense for their safety. There is also uneven ground and trip hazards outside where the young people walk.

The sleeping accommodation for young people is unsuitable. Some bedroom doors have alarms on which are not subject to individual risk assessment and young people are restricted to where they can access at night time. The kitchen doors and some corridor doors are locked once they are in bed. These actions do not promote young people's independence or their freedom to access food and drink during the night.

Young people's care plans are good quality and are effectively linked to their health needs. They contain details of their behaviours and guide staff to understand and respond effectively. However, the views and feelings of young people are not actively sought. Resident meetings are infrequent and it is not clear that the young people's comments are acted on.

Young people benefit from a broad range of social and recreational activities that includes events in the wider community. For example, they access a sea scouts group and youth rugby teams. Staff and young people use these opportunities effectively to increase the public's awareness and understanding of being deaf and to also teach them some sign language. Staff help young people who are learning to drive by arranging for them to take their theory driving test at the school, where facilities for deaf individuals are better than at the driving centre.

Staff have the skills to communicate with young people. They ensure that young people feel included in all conversations. As a result, young people's enthusiasm and their opportunities to develop their own communication skills are very good.

Young people are supported to keep themselves physically fit and in good emotional health. Staff engage young people in regular sporting exercises and recreational walks, as well as providing opportunities for young people to obtain sports coaching qualifications. Young people benefit from the school's health services, which ensure that their physical and psychological needs are met. An on-site audiologist attends to their hearing impairment needs.

Young people have a variety of food at meals times, which are social events that young people enjoy. As part of their independence training, staff help young people learn to cook their own meals. Once young people are confident of their cooking skills they can have dinner parties without staff.

Family members were overwhelmingly positive about the school and their child's experience since they started. A parent said that their son's 'all-round language and communications skills have improved and he is making age appropriate friendships.' Family members also report that the support staff provide to help young people settle into the school is good. Staff provide regular good quality communication between the school and the young people's parents.

## **How well children and young people are protected**

### **Requires improvement**

The acting head of care's response to a young person who has decided to be in an exploitative relationship is unsatisfactory, as their individual risk assessment does not highlight the concern, or document the strategies to keep him safe and educate him about making safe choices. Therefore, staff are not sufficiently directed how to respond to his needs and their practices cannot be reviewed for their effectiveness. In actuality, the young person has regular sessions with the clinical psychologist and the head of care works collaboratively with the social worker, the young person's parents and the police. However, this work is not evident in their care plan.

Young people are not protected by satisfactory fire safety precautions. One bedroom has a door that is not a fire door and some bedroom fire doors do not close properly. An internal fire exit has to be opened with a key from one direction, and one young person does not have a vibrating mat under his pillow used to alert him in the event of a fire.

The school's designated safeguarding officer has good links with the local authority safeguarding board. All allegations of abuse have been reported in line with locally agreed child protection procedures. The head of care alerts social workers to any concerns about young people, and families are involved at the appropriate times. Not all staff who may speak with young people about child protection concerns have a high level of sign language skills. A recommendation is raised in relation to this issue to ensure communication is properly understood and that staff do not ask leading questions.

Young people are protected by good recruitment checks on all new staff. The human resources department use an innovative strategy, whereby they send photo identification of the applicant to the referee to assist with verifying references. This ensures that the referee can positively identify the person applying for the role.

Young people stabilise and reduce their challenging behaviour as a result of the quality of the friendships they make and the support offered by staff. Staff respond sensibly to incidents and only use restraint to protect the young person from harming themselves or others. Staff do not use sanctions in response to severe incidents as they understand that the young person is in distress and further negative consequences will not help them. The young people are offered



medical attention following the use of restraint and the records of interventions used are clear. The head of care analyses incidents to identify patterns and to reduce the need for future intervention.

Staff promote positive behaviour through praise, recognition of achievements and strong relationships. Young people's previous frustrations of not being understood are reduced by attending this school. They feel included and happy, showing these emotions through a decrease in their frustrations and anxiety.

Young people learn to keep themselves safe when using the internet, social media and on-line games. They state that bullying is not an issue and it is apparent that young people care and look out for one another.

Staff complete risk assessments for activities that young people take part in. As a result, they are kept safe from avoidable harm and enabled to have fun and take age appropriate risks as part of their development.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

### **Requires improvement**

The written record of complaints relating to the residential provision is ineffective. Staff do not document the action they take following a complaint received from a parent. As a result, it is not evident how the complaint has been investigated thoroughly and what actions are put in place in response to the matters raised.

The supervision arrangements for staff require improvement. Two health professionals do not receive clinical supervision as required and some managers who deliver supervision do not have the necessary training. The quality of the care staff's supervision varies. Some are good and take place regularly, while others are infrequent and do not have links between the staff's supervisions and their appraisals. Consequently, not all staff are supported in their role by trained and qualified individuals.

The management team regularly monitors the quality of care provided. Governors also provide external scrutiny. The monitoring exercises they undertake are not effective in identifying weaknesses and making improvements to the quality of care.

The residential provision is led by experienced leaders and managers. Staff are deployed effectively so that positive relationships can be developed and any conflicts between young people are managed safely. Staff morale is good and the school does not use an agency to cover staffing shortfalls.

Staff member's training and development activities are effective. They are focused on ensuring they can meet the specific needs of the young people. All staff must achieve a British sign language level three qualification within a set

time of commencing their employment.

Staff work collaboratively to provide stability to the young people. They work together across the school and develop a shared approach. Staff said that they feel supported by their peers and well led by the management team.

The head of care and staff work positively with parents and the local authority. A social worker provides positive feedback on the progress of their young person and states that 'there is good communication between the staff, parents and themselves.'

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113654
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC022216
<b>DfE registration number</b>	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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	32
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 17
<b>Chief Executive &amp; Principal</b>	Mr Jonathan Farnhill
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	14/01/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 267 023
<b>Email address</b>	KBurgess@exeterdeafacademy.ac.uk

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