

# Mary Hare School for the Deaf

Mary Hare School, Arlington Manor, Snelsmore Common, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 3BQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Mary Hare School is a non-maintained, mixed special school near Newbury in Berkshire, for pupils aged five to 19 who have severe and profound hearing loss. The mixed-ability primary centre is on a separate site, and offers both day and weekly boarding placements. The senior school is also mixed ability, although pupils from the primary school do not automatically progress to the secondary school. The secondary school admits pupils from all over the United Kingdom, and has a small number of pupils from overseas. It offers both day and termly boarding placements. Nearly all of the children and young people board. The primary school currently has one boarding facility with bedrooms to suit the age profile of the school. The secondary school has six boarding houses. Year 7 has two dedicated boarding houses; Years 8 to 10 live in two larger boarding houses; Year 11 pupils live in a purpose-built boarding house; and the sixth form has four separate accommodation blocks of individual and shared study bedrooms.

At the time of this inspection there were 244 pupils in school, including 210 boarders.

**Inspection dates:** 16 to 18 January 2018

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>good</b>
---	-------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
---	---------------------------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 29 to 30 June 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is good because:

- The leadership and management of the school are very good. Leaders work closely and effectively to manage change and development.
- The management of the residential provision is strong and effective.
- Leaders and senior staff know the school's strengths and areas for development; they have identified shortfalls and are taking action to address them.
- A committed staff team works in the residential provision. Children and young people form trusting relationships with the staff.
- The well-being team is suitably trained and creative, and benefits from continued professional development. As a result, team members are able to successfully prioritise children's and young people's well-being. Children and young people make good progress with their education and their social and emotional needs are well met.
- Safeguarding matters are in safe hands. The dedicated safeguarding team is knowledgeable and has good links with external safeguarding agencies.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The monitoring and application of health and safety matters.
- The review of surveys and the action taken in response to them. This particularly relates to the recent bullying and food surveys.
- Improve the governors' scrutiny of areas such as recruitment.
- Consider bringing forward planned upgrading of residential accommodation.

## **What does the residential special school need to do to improve?**

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

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

- 6.1 The school ensures compliance with relevant health and safety laws by drawing up and implementing effectively a written health and safety policy.  
This relates to the management of vehicles on site during the school day and the safety measures in place to protect children and young people.
- 7.1 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 20058.  
This relates to the time taken to address shortfalls identified in fire safety inspections and audits.

### **Recommendations**

- Review the school's recruitment policy, tighten up the timeliness in requesting references prior to interview and improve the quality of scrutiny of references.
- Ensure that the auditing and monitoring carried out by governors are systematic with effective challenge, and that governors' training records are up to date.
- Analyse any incidents of bullying and consider how staff are deployed to aid the prevention of bullying.
- Ensure that there is effective communication between health staff and care staff.
- Expedite the accommodation upgrade.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children and young people make good progress at this school. The experiences that they have while they are residential pupils add to their development in areas such as education, social inclusion and well-being. In addition, children and young people are able to build on their self-esteem and grow in confidence. The staff have a very good understanding of the feelings of isolation and vulnerability that the children and young people may experience as a consequence of their hearing impairments. The increase in staffing numbers enables staff to better identify those children and young people who may be feeling isolated at times.

Children and young people at the school receive a bespoke education that is tailored to their individual needs. Staff work hard to address the language acquisition deficit which learners have typically experienced. This does include raising vocabulary awareness within boarding time as well as during lesson time. Children and young people also have speech and language therapy which is timed to ensure that they still experience their planned curriculums in full. Their education is auditory/oral, maximising their chances of inclusion in later life.

A strength of the school is the work that the staff do to create trusting relationships with the children and young people. Children and young people enjoy spending time with the staff, who demonstrate good role-modelling skills. The feedback from children and young people confirms that positive relationships are built: the 'staff are second to none' and 'staff are always there to speak to'.

The school promotes the voice of the child. Children and young people are provided with numerous ways of expressing their views, wishes, opinions and worries. The staff take all feedback seriously, and take action wherever possible. Children and young people develop a sense of belonging which encourages them to participate in and enjoy a wide range of activities, experiences and opportunities. In addition, they are able to experience employment opportunities as they get older.

Children and young people receive individualised care that is creative and ensures that all children and young people are treated with sensitivity, respect and dignity. The staff promote and encourage healthy lifestyles. Routine and emerging health needs are met by an experienced and well-trained team that includes two qualified nurses and an inspirational well-being coordinator. The team members work very well together and play a significant part in meeting the individual needs of the children and young people. Medication arrangements are robust. Systems for managing medication errors are effective.

Strong communication systems have been developed between the different departments at the school. Medical, education, pastoral and residential staff all communicate well to provide a holistic approach to the care that children and young

people receive. It is noted that the communication of information between health and care staff could be improved and this is currently being addressed.

The food provided at the school is of a good standard. The school is aware that some children, young people and parents have fed back negatively about the food. In response, the school has recently undertaken a food survey that it is sharing with the catering department in order to address areas that could be improved on.

Children and young people live in accommodation that ranges from very good to satisfactory. Some areas remain tired, including some bathrooms that are in need of upgrading. The school continues to implement its ongoing programme of refurbishment and upgrading, but the timelines of this needs to be reconsidered.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Children and young people are kept safe at this school. Senior leaders have forged constructive relationships with external safeguarding professionals and use these to good effect. School leaders have been proactive in making, and following up, referrals if they have concerns about children's and young people's home lives, or if other factors are affecting their safety. The dedicated safeguarding lead provides effective leadership in all areas of safeguarding.

The culture of the school is one which promotes nurturing relationships between staff and children and young people. Safeguarding procedures are used to address concerns about staff conduct, although none of significance have occurred in this inspection period.

Where there have been concerns about behaviour between children and young people, the school shares these with external professionals, while also planning thoughtfully and assertively how to manage the situation. Leaders in the school continually keep parents informed of issues that affect their children.

This inspection period has presented a range of safeguarding challenges to school leaders, which have all been managed well, wisely and professionally.

Feedback from children and young people and their parents indicates that some bullying is experienced. The school is proactively trying to understand and address this; at the time of this inspection, a bullying survey, completed by all students in the school, was being analysed. Bullying is taken very seriously by the school and examples of the school considering and using exclusion to manage this were seen. It is also noted that children and young people identify the lack of staff presence and availability at some times of the day and evening as a factor. The school's leadership team and well-being coordinator are drawing up options to address this.

The school has taken action in response to the increasing risks posed by social media so that it can keep children and young people safe, both in school and at home. The staff understand the current issues, including exploitation and online safety. The school has included parents in its response, to extend parents and carers knowledge where needed and to aid working in partnership.

Staff in the school receive relevant safeguarding training and implement the school's policies effectively. School governors have a close relationship with senior leaders and they are kept informed about all important safeguarding matters. There were no records to demonstrate what safeguarding training governors have received, nor was their oversight of safeguarding clear in the audit trail. Minutes were seen to demonstrate that safeguarding matters are reported to the care and education committee, but the governors' assessments of these matters were not evident.

Staff in the school are safely recruited. However, files seen indicated that references are not always taken up prior to interview, and that greater scrutiny of the quality of references could be applied.

The school has clear health and safety policies which are implemented in practice. However, it was noted that a fire risk assessment for the primary school site contained actions that were set to be completed in August 2017, but which were not actually done until December 2017/January 2018. This delay was neither necessary nor adequately explained, and compromised some minor, but necessary, aspects of the setting's safety. During the inspection, it was also noted that the presence on site of lorries, for example in order to deliver fuel, was poorly managed and required better management to ensure that children and young people were protected from the risk of accident.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The leadership and management of the school are strong. The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate outstanding commitment and passion. The experienced vice-principal (care) provides strategic oversight of the residential provision, and is instrumental in bringing about change. His management style is very effective. For example, this can be seen in the increase in staff morale and the staff acknowledging that opportunities for career progression have improved. The vice-principal is supported by effective heads of care who undertake regular quality assurance and internal monitoring. The vice-principal is ambitious and has a vision for the development of care that is evidenced through an action plan, and by governors prioritising the development of the residential provision. The members of the senior leadership team know the school's strengths and weaknesses and they work to ensure that the children and young people receive the best care and education possible.

There number of residential staff has increased since the last inspection. The staff group is established, suitably qualified and competent. Some staff have worked at

the school for over 20 years, but are still able to manage change well. The staff team has a wide range of interests and skills. The staff receive training which gives them the skills to provide a very good standard of care. There are always sufficient staff on shift to meet the needs of each residential child or young person, although this is continually being assessed. There are ongoing questions and requests from a few parents regarding staff being trained to use British Sign Language. This matter is one that leaders continue to discuss, although there remains a clear commitment to focusing on verbal rather than non-verbal methods of communication. The staff receive regular supervision and appraisals, which allow them to reflect upon practice and focus on their own personal development. Children and young people talk positively about the staff teams, and say staff are there to support them. One said, 'Staff always sort out any problems I have and staff react quickly to any bullying behaviour.'

Relationships between the school and key stakeholders are very good. In particular, the vast majority of parents are extremely happy and confident about the care their children receive. Areas of concern identified by a few parents prior to the inspection have been looked at during this inspection. The school has already identified the areas of parental concern, and is taking action to understand them and put them right. These included bullying, isolation and food. Parents are complimentary about the communication they receive and the ease with which they can contact a staff member at any time. Professionals, parents, staff members, children and young people all gave positive feedback about the residential provision during the inspection.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC011137

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Peter Gale

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01635 244 200

**Email address:** p.gale@maryhare.org.uk



## **Inspectors**

Liz Driver, social care inspector (lead)  
Kenneth Smith, regulatory inspection manager  
Emeline Evans, social care inspector  
Linda Steele, HMI



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018