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Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Independent Specialist College

Inspection dates		15–17 January 2019

Overall effectiveness			**Requires improvement**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	**Requires improvement**	Provision for students with high needs	**Requires improvement**
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	**Requires improvement**		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	**Good**		
Outcomes for students	**Requires improvement**		

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are too variable across the college. As a result, students' progress is not yet typically good.

- Managers do not use information on students' starting points to plan their next steps in learning well enough. Arrangements to measure the progress students are making across the college are underdeveloped.

- Students who leave the college do not routinely receive the support and help they require to ensure that they progress onto their first choice of employment, education or training.

- Feedback for students does not help them know their next steps in learning or how to improve their work sufficiently.

- Students' knowledge and skills in English and in mathematics are not sufficiently well developed through their programme, so they can apply these in all learning and community settings.

The provider has the following strengths

- The new leaders and managers are relentless in their efforts to rectify many of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Improvements to the quality of aspects of teaching and in the support and care for students are clear.

- Since the previous inspection, more students are undertaking appropriate qualifications to support them into further education or independence.

- Students talk assuredly about keeping themselves safe and are now confident that staff have effective skills to understand and act in response to any concerns.

- Leaders' and managers' daily actions bring to life the college's mission of 'passion, pace and purpose'. The improvements made are ensuring that the college is better meeting the needs of the changing student population.

- Students' use of British sign language has improved. Students therefore have greater access to the wider deaf community, grow in confidence to communicate effectively and have pride in their own identity.

Full report

Information about the provider

■ Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (the college) includes a school for pupils aged five to 16 and a college for students aged over 16. The college is based in Devon close to Exeter city centre. The vast majority of the students are profoundly deaf and use British sign language (BSL) as their first language; many students have additional barriers to learning. Students follow individual programmes at the college site or at one of the partner colleges. All have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The college offers day and residential placements. Students from many parts of England and Wales attend the college.

■ This inspection looked at the college provision only. The school, the children's home and the residential accommodation were also inspected at the same time.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

■ Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so it is at least good by:
  – using information about students' starting points at the beginning of their course to plan for their next steps in learning more accurately and effectively
  – ensuring that feedback on students' work helps them to improve their knowledge and skills at an appropriate rate so that they make more rapid progress
  – ensuring that students develop their English and their mathematics skills throughout their programmes and in all settings.

■ Improve arrangements to identify accurately and check the academic and personal progress each student is making.

■ Improve support and help for students so that they can make informed decisions about their next steps towards further education, employment, training or independence and are more successful in achieving their goals.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have focused their actions on improving aspects of the school and residential provision. Leaders and the new managers have been equally as determined to bring about improvements to the quality of the college. Overall, they have acted with passion, pace and energy. However, efforts to secure improvements in the post-16 provision lag slightly behind the other provision because leaders have prioritised the school and residential care. The majority of post-16 actions are relatively recent and are yet to have an impact on the student experience.

- Leaders and managers are successfully driving their clear and ambitious vision forward. The provision of high-quality, post-16 specialist education, training and support to deaf young people who have mild to complex additional learning needs, within an inclusive and fully bilingual learning setting, communicating with English and BSL, is increasingly becoming a reality. Consequently, high aspirations, including developing a strong identity within the deaf community and feeling valued as members of the wider community, typically characterise students' experiences.

- Managers have secured strong improvements to students' personal development, behaviour and well-being. However, they recognise that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet good in all subjects, for example, in mathematics and hairdressing. Further improvements are required to ensure that the use of target-setting, feedback on students' work and questioning of students, enable students to be challenged sufficiently and deepen their knowledge.

- Changes made to the management of the college are proving successful in tackling many of the weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection. These include the appointment of two co-principals who have responsibility for the quality of education and safeguarding and care. An intensive programme of coaching, support and training for staff, delivered by the co-principals, is proving beneficial. Teachers now receive thought-provoking and comprehensive feedback which is addressing areas for improvement and identifies the impact on learning over time.

- Staff provide students with helpful information on their future choices and next steps, which is supported well by independent careers advice, a personalised work experience therapy and supported internships. However, arrangements to measure the correlation between students' aspirations and plans on entry to the college, and their actual destinations are less effective. Leaders and managers are not using this information routinely to inform curriculum planning.

- Self-assessment is well informed by a wide range of quality assurance activities and feedback from parents, students and external partners. Managers use the detailed and self-critical post-inspection action plan well to monitor the progress they are making in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, the plan does not yet measure the impact that the actions are having on students and their learning.

- Leaders and managers pinpoint the next steps in the development of the curriculum effectively. Students follow one of four learning pathways, depending on their starting points and future aspirations. Clear plans are in place to broaden students' range and

pace of the learning, to develop new vocational provision for students aged 14 to 16 and ensure that they are better prepared for further learning, work and life in the community.

■ Managers use a wide range of monitoring activities to assess the quality of teaching at the college. The findings from observations of learning sessions by teachers and managers, the scrutiny of student work and their improvement targets are used to plan improvements effectively. However, the same level of oversight of teaching is not yet evident for students who study at the partner colleges or the hair academy, to ensure that they all make good or better progress.

■ Managers use performance management systems successfully to tackle weaknesses in teaching, learning and student support. Managers are supporting more staff to improve the quality of their work, using supervision meetings and the formal appraisal processes. However, for managers' full ambitions to be realised, they acknowledge that improvements are required in the frequency of meetings, the depth and breadth of discussions and in how they use personal and college improvement targets.

■ A culture of mutual respect and tolerance for others in the community pervades the college. Staff actively encourage students to engage well with each other. They provide students with information on topics such as how to communicate their safety concerns to the hearing community and how to use the internet safely. Students' confidence is developed when participating in the wide range of learning opportunities at college and in the community available to them. For example, when attending a 'youth take-over day' for all schools, hosted by the local council, students confidently questioned councillors and provided them with feedback on how existing systems and processes might better meet their needs.

The governance of the provider

■ Trustees and governors have a clear understanding of their strategic role. They have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They have confidence in the actions taken by managers to support improvements. Significant changes to trustees and governors' roles and responsibilities have ensured that they have the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience, such as in education, finance, safeguarding and BSL, to challenge and support managers effectively in improving the learning experience and outcomes for students. The introduction of new sub-committees has ensured that governors now ask well-informed questions that hold managers to account for rapid improvements in quality.

■ Trustees and governors are very committed to making improvements at the college. They meet often, and managers provide them with regular reports on the progress made in improving the provision, student progress and safeguarding. They have ambitious plans for the charity and the wider academy; these include their commitment to a significant project to build new learning facilities for students. The plans include moving to a new site and providing students with a purpose-built learning environment. A major fundraising campaign is well under way and has already raised considerable funds for the project.

Safeguarding

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- The new leaders and managers have worked extremely diligently to ensure that safeguarding at the college supports all students well. The new procedures support all staff in clearly understanding their roles and responsibilities. Students were keen to explain that they know that staff take their concerns seriously and act on them swiftly.

- Managers have devised a comprehensive and well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme for all students. This supports staff to educate and support students' understanding of key issues such as positive relationships, internet safety and appropriate physical contact. Students' understanding of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism is underdeveloped. However, managers have clear plans in place to support students' development in this area.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment   Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection. Effective actions by leaders and managers to tackle weaknesses and develop teachers' skills are proving successful. A small minority of teaching is now strong but too much variation in the quality remains for it to be good overall.

- When students start at the college, the assessment of their starting is not routinely precise or reliable. Therefore, teachers' use of this information to plan students' next steps in learning, or to measure the progress being made is not consistent or accurate enough. Managers put arrangements in place in September 2018 to improve this aspect, but it is too early to measure the impact of their actions on students' progress.

- Feedback on students' work is not helping them to progress at the rate they are capable of. While most work is assessed, errors are not routinely identified, or advice provided on how to correct them. As a result, students are not clear on what they need to do to improve their work.

- Students' targets are not routinely appropriate or accessible for all. Many students do not know what they are aiming for overall as they have too many targets and are not clear how to prioritise these to improve their skills and knowledge. EHC plan targets are often too general. For the majority of learners, the breakdown of these targets does not focus sufficiently on their educational goals. While students' EHC plan targets are reviewed and monitored regularly, joint target-setting between therapeutic and educational staff is underdeveloped.

- Students do not develop English or mathematical skills in different learning settings well enough. Approaches for developing students' English or mathematics skills and knowledge do not consider their diverse learning needs. Consequently, students who have competent, age-appropriate language skills and students who have complex needs or very limited skills are at times expected to undertake similar tasks. A few students do not have the opportunity to learn alongside peers, as they attend classes where the levels of learning are too broad, or they take part in one-to-one sessions with their tutors.

- Teachers do not plan routinely to include English or mathematics across the curriculum in the different learning settings. As a result, the majority of students are not having the opportunity to practise these important skills throughout their day at college or in their supported placements. For example, students at the hair academy are unsure of technical terms for skills use. Students were also unaware of expected times to complete specific

tasks in the salon, which does not make them ready for employment in this industry. Students on supported internships do get good opportunities to practise functional English, mathematics and problem-solving, but these are not recorded to help them in their progress or preparation for the future.

- The quality of teaching and assessment of BSL has improved. Teachers encourage students to work independently and at their individual levels to gain and develop this important skill, which gives them access to the wider deaf community. More students and staff have a better understanding and skill level than in previous years.

- Teachers benefit from targeted professional development and staff meetings to improve the quality of teaching and develop the curriculum offer effectively. As a result, staff are more motivated and share good practice with each other more readily. The vast majority of staff are well trained, and managers have implemented a training programme to ensure that more staff are trained to at least level 3 BSL.

- Teachers empower students well to support each other and develop interpersonal skills and share skills and knowledge with each other. For example, students develop their confidence when signing and explaining how they have named potential hazards and how to avoid them when discussing fire safety using a range of real examples in front of their peers.

- 'Ready Steady Go' sessions at the start of the day are helping to ensure that more students are ready to learn and have good access to current affairs with items raised by staff or students. As a result, students are more aware of the wider world and teachers use these items to discuss British values and internet safety well.

- Teachers and learning leaders support students well in the classroom. Students are confident to ask for help and staff are clear on how to support students with a wide range of learning and behavioural difficulties and disabilities.

- Teachers use technology effectively enabling accelerated learning for the majority of students. All students develop their independence when using computer tablets to support their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare   Good

- Students are proud of their work and value the support they receive. Teachers actively encourage students to work collaboratively together and recognise how this enables them to develop their independence. One student statement, typical of many, said, 'We try and fix our problems together'

- Students effectively demonstrate respect and tolerance of others and this is continuously reinforced by all staff members. Students understand how to stay safe online. For example, they can confidently discuss the risks and dangers of viral pranks. They also benefit from PSHE online safety day activities, designed to support students over the summer holiday period.

- Students talk confidently about how to keep themselves safe and are now assured that the safeguarding team have the communication skills to understand and action their concerns. There has been a significant reduction in behavioural interventions due to teachers having effective training on de-escalation techniques.

- Students value their education, and few are absent. Students who have had had higher absence rates have improved as absence is well monitored. Students are punctual and well prepared for learning and work.

- Students benefit from purposeful work-based learning, including a newly developed supported internship programme and extended work-based learning opportunities. Students have good opportunities to practise functional mathematics, English and problem-solving in the work environment. For example, one student developed confidence when working on a till in a busy supermarket, communicating with customers and working the till independently. Staff do not currently capture students' skills development in the workplace on the supported internship and therefore many learners do not realise they are developing their skills in English and mathematics.

- Students have access to good impartial information and careers advice. Managers have developed a differentiated route for academic and vocational students to ensure that they have appropriate guidance. Staff support students in developing a clear three-year plan for them while at the college. For example, in a careers meeting one student was able to confidently articulate his plans for the future as a result of his work experience and taster college programme. The college does not currently offer a wide enough breadth of destination opportunities to suit all students. Students do not always have the relevant skills to access a wide range of learning, living and work options. The college has established a new Careers Framework and 'Me, myself and I' programme to address this, but the outcomes of this are too early to be measured.

- Students' understanding of themselves, the deaf community and their place within the wider community is excellent. Staff work hard to ensure that students are resilient and have a voice to effect change. The PSHE programme has been carefully developed to enable students to develop their own identity and explore life in modern Britain. For example, students have campaigned Parliament for improved signing on national news programmes and others challenged the name of a local community centre as they felt it was inappropriate.

- Students participate in a range of fitness activities on and off site. One student has achieved his lifetime ambition to play for his country's deaf rugby team. The 'Ready Steady Go' sessions include a wide range of health and well-being topics and students are encouraged to eat healthily when making their own food.

- Multidisciplinary working is underdeveloped; therapy teams and educational staff have worked together recently to introduce assessments for those entering the college. These teams plan to work together to set students joint targets and will monitor them together. This has meant that some students currently have not benefited fully from embedded therapeutic support within the educational environment.

- For the majority of students, their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe from extremism and radicalised behaviour is currently underdeveloped. Students are developing skills to better understand these dangers through the PSHE programme.

Outcomes for students   Requires improvement

- Overall, students' progress while they are at college is too variable and, in a few cases, too slow. Managers' evaluation of the progress that students make, compared to their

starting points, is weak. Teachers' use of assessment information during progress reviews to identify students' next steps in learning and to move learning on at the appropriate pace is underdeveloped.

- Students for whom it is appropriate have not completed the relevant functional English and mathematics qualification. Managers have recently introduced plans to improve this aspect of provision.

- Students develop good skills to help them live independently, including keeping themselves safe, cooking, gaining confidence and independent travel. For example, students communicated confidently when presenting a deaf awareness briefing to all inspectors at the start of this inspection.

- The majority of students' written work is at the expected standard. In the vast majority of cases, practical work undertaken during work placements is beyond that expected of the students.

- Students' understanding and use of BSL is very good. A small number of students completed their level 2 qualification last year and managers have plans to offer a more appropriate level 3 qualification this year to recognise their understanding of BSL.

- Students who attend external partner colleges achieved their qualifications last year. Over half of these students gained distinctions in their main course and the majority are continuing their studies this year.

- Students do not always receive the help and support they need when leaving the college to ensure that they have access to their first choice of further education, training or employment. Managers recognise that further work is required during this transition period. The range of destination opportunities for students is underdeveloped. Too many students last year did not get their first choice of education, training or work and too many are not in education, training or employment currently.

Students enjoy their experience at the college, grow in confidence and become more resilient because of some skilled support in lessons, work placements and the enrichment programme, which includes topics such as mindfulness. Students learn to manage their emotions and behaviours well.

Provider details

Unique reference number	132001
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of students	16+
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	25
Principal/CEO	Trudy Chappell and Sylvan Dewing
Telephone number	01392 267023
Website	www.exeterdeafacademy.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
Total number of students (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	15	5	2	3	–	–	–	–

Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	–	–	–	–	–	–

Number of traineeships	16–19	19+	Total
	–	–	–

Number of students aged 14 to 16	–
Number of students for which the provider receives high-needs funding	25
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Exeter College Bicton College Hair @ The Academy

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal (education), as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent post-inspection action plan and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Tracey Zimmerman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denise Olander	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Rudd	Ofsted Inspector

Student View

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