

# Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, 50 Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4NF  
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education is a non-maintained special school for moderately, severely and profoundly deaf pupils. The boarding provision is located within the school grounds. Most pupils are learning English as an additional language and some have delayed use of their first language, British Sign Language (BSL). All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. At the time of the inspection, 24 pupils were boarding at the school. For the purpose of this report, the term 'children' refers to residential pupils who attend the school.

**Inspection dates:** 15 to 17 January 2019

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<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:** 11 December 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** inadequate

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The inspirational leadership of the new co-principals and the head of care has been instrumental to the success of this rapidly improving school.
- Staff are passionate, highly motivated and determined to ensure that the momentum of improvement is maintained.
- The development of the safeguarding team has had a fundamentally positive impact on the management of safeguarding concerns and the welfare of the children. The systems that are in place ensure that key, skilled staff manage any concerns and worries for children in a timely and effective way.
- Relationships between staff and children are excellent. These relationships enable children to build trust with adults and help them feel safe and secure.
- The school's new behaviour management policy helps to ensure that staff manage the children's behaviour effectively. Clarity and consistency of approach have resulted in a significant reduction in incidents.
- Relationships with outside agencies are effective. Children are provided with excellent support when they need it.
- Parents report that they are pleased with the quality of care and the education that their children receive.
- Governors and trustees challenge and support leaders effectively to ensure that children's needs are being met.
- The school operates in accordance with its statement of purpose. This is a clearly written document that describes the ethos and the services provided.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Ensure that the care that all children receive is regularly reviewed and adapted in a consistent way.
- Ensure that all internal investigations are robust. Make sure that the child's account is at the heart of investigative processes.
- Ensure that managers have good oversight of accidents, so that they understand why children get hurt and how they can reduce future risks.
- Ensure that staff who have health conditions or hidden disabilities are assessed and supported to ensure that they can undertake their roles to the best of their abilities.

## **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:

- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 13.7 The school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that robust policies and processes are in place to support the safe keeping and administration of medications.
- Ensure that supervision provided to staff is consistent and meaningful for all staff.
- Ensure that staff who have health conditions or hidden disabilities are assessed and supported to ensure that they can undertake their roles to the best of their abilities.

## **Inspection judgements**

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

Since the appointment of the new leadership team, children have made good progress across all aspects of their lives. The new co-principals and the head of care have been instrumental in ensuring positive outcomes for children and the success of this rapidly improving school.

The day-to-day care that children receive is consistently good across the whole service. Incidents involving children have significantly reduced. Care is underpinned by clear and directive bespoke care planning. The strategies and models that staff use to help children are applied across care and education. This approach has reduced the children's emotional distress.

Relationships between the children and staff are excellent. Staff spend quality time with the children and are very sensitive to their needs. They have a good understanding of the children's previous experiences and how these affect their behaviour. Staff use this knowledge to support children and help them to better make sense of their situations. Children can identify adults who they can go to if they have any worries or concerns. The children told the inspectors that they like the staff and find them easy to talk to.

Children have experiences at school that enhance their life opportunities. They are proud to be part of the school community. Children socialise, undertake activities and share experiences with peers who face similar challenges in their lives.

Children are supported to communicate with others. There is a strong focus on helping families and friends to communicate with children when they are at home. This reduces frustration and improves the quality of their family lives.

Children are being well prepared for independence. The staff encourage and support children to achieve their goals. Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated at every opportunity.

Children have a voice within the school and their views are acted upon. For example, children's surveys inform practice improvements. Parental involvement in this process has created a better understanding of how staff can support parents to keep their children safer online.

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

Safeguarding is effective. Significant steps have been taken to ensure that any worries or concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children are effectively and quickly acted upon.

The development of the safeguarding team has ensured that key, skilled staff manage any concerns and worries for children in a timely and effective way.

The revised behaviour policy supports staff to manage the children's behaviour more effectively. Behaviour management is restorative, and consequences are rarely necessary. When consequences are imposed, they are fair and appropriate. This clarity and consistency has resulted in a significant reduction in incidents and in the use of physical intervention.

Children's individual risk assessments are detailed and relevant to each child. They provide staff with all of the information required to help them to protect the children. The strategies identified to reduce harm to children can be seen in every aspect of the care and education that the children receive. This results in more consistent and safer care.

Staff recruitment is robust and effective, with good attention to detail. However, not all staff who have health conditions or hidden disabilities have been risk-assessed and supported to ensure that they can undertake their roles to the best of their abilities.

The school has effective arrangements in place for the safe keeping and administration of medication. These arrangements could be enhanced by implementing and adhering to policy and procedures.

Not all internal investigations considering concerns about staff are robust. Inspectors found that the child's account is not always at the heart of the investigative process. On one occasion, the child's account was not used to understand what had occurred. During the inspection, the leadership team took immediate action to address this shortfall.

Leaders and managers do not always have effective oversight of accidents involving the children. This prevents them from understanding why children are getting hurt and how they can reduce future risks.

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

Children, parents and staff respect and trust the leadership team. Overwhelmingly, comments received by inspectors about the leadership team were positive. Comments include 'leaders are passionate and ambitious', the school is 'a magical place to work' and 'leaders are accessible and listen to us'. Consequently, there has been significant improvement to the quality of the care children receive.

Leaders are ambitious and resilient. They confront challenges with passion and determination. They have listened and responded to the concerns raised at previous inspections. Together, they work tirelessly to drive forward the necessary improvements, in the best interests of children.

The leadership team has taken effective action to address the use of external agencies and consultants to support them to make necessary changes. This has resulted in the staff's skill-set improving. Children received improved care and their welfare is promoted.

Middle leaders demonstrate that they have the skills and expertise required. Skill gaps are known, understood and supported. All managers are outward-looking and seek to find innovative ways to find solutions to problems. For example, they implemented the 'signs of safety model', which now underpins safeguarding decision-making. This ensures that important decisions made are evidence-based and are not carried out in isolation.

Staff are provided with good-quality and relevant training. They have an appraisal system that looks to identify areas that require additional support. Staff receive regular supervision, but the quality of this is not always consistent.

Communication between leaders and staff is highly effective. Daily handovers are informative and structured. These focus on the children and their emerging needs. Staff feel respected and supported by senior leaders. They welcome how leaders listen to their views and suggestions to better support the children.

## **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:** SC022216

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:**

Trudy Chappell, Co-Principal for Education  
Sylvan Dewing, Co-Principal for Care

**Type of school:** residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01392 267 023

**Email address:** [info@exeterdeafacademy.ac.uk](mailto:info@exeterdeafacademy.ac.uk)

## **Inspectors**

Tracey Ledder, social care inspector (lead)  
Heather Chaplin, social care inspector





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 2019