

# Deaf Academy

The Deaf Academy, 1 Douglas Avenue, Exmouth, Devon EX8 2AU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this residential special school**

The Deaf Academy is a non-maintained special school for moderately, severely and profoundly deaf children and young people. The residential provision is located within the school grounds.

The academy and boarding provision relocated from Exeter to brand new facilities in Exmouth during September 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, Ofsted suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

### **Inspection dates: 21 to 23 September 2021**

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account**      **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected      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:** 26 June 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Accommodation is comprised of modern, well-equipped flats, which are furnished with the children and young people's needs fully considered. Communal areas, such as the garden and common-room area, provide inviting spaces for children and young people to socialise. However, there is a great deal of health and safety signage, and a lack of homely touches, such as wall decoration.

Children and young people benefit from nurturing care that is in line with their needs. The individual care provided is also constantly evolving in response to children and young people's progress and age-appropriate development. Some children and young people were previously limited by their environments. Since moving to the academy, they have gained crucial communication and social skills and access to education, which is supporting them to thrive.

Staff provide attentive oversight of children and young people with increased support needs. This has had a direct impact in reducing the number of incidents and physical interventions. Children and young people are making significant progress.

The support for children and young people to move on is excellent. In conjunction with education staff, the care team helps children and young people to develop healthy behaviours, keep themselves safe, gain practical life skills and access accommodation.

Children and young people love staying at the academy and several spoken with want the judgement from this inspection to be 'outstanding'. No issues were raised by children and young people regarding the care they receive, and they did not raise any areas for improvement.

The environment throughout the residential area is calm and welcoming. Children and young people were seen to be happy and relaxed, enjoying each other's company and free time after school. Activities are also available for children and young people to enjoy with the entire academy community.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Support and education for children and young people to understand how to keep themselves safe is thorough and individualised. Children and young people are helped to understand how their bodies work including, the importance of appropriate touch, and how healthy relationships work.

Staff understand children and young people's needs well. They address any behavioural issues in a nurturing and respectful way. Young people who are entering adulthood are supported well to take appropriate risks, and this promotes their positive move on to independence.

The welfare team is an in-house resource with a wide-ranging skill base. This multi-disciplinary team is promoting the effective sharing and management of safeguarding concerns. Children and young people are confident to access the support and nurture that this team provides. Children and young people were seen to frequent the office during the inspection in a relaxed and informal manner.

Management of allegations is thorough, and appropriate procedures are in place. When there are concerns, action taken is effective. The minimal complaints received have also been well managed. In comparison, compliments highlight the good standard of care provided.

Medication systems require several documents to be reviewed during the administering of medication. This needs to be streamlined to reduce the risk of human error. On a few occasions, medication has not been administered at the correct time. Action taken in response to these errors is robust.

Care-planning documents are child-centred. However, they do not always provide robust guidance for staff to ensure that risk is managed effectively.

Overall, recruitment processes follow good safeguarding practice. However, a robust approach to managing known risk on one application was lacking.

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

During the pandemic, leaders and managers ensured that vulnerable children and young people were safe. Staff kept in close contact with children and young people and their families. This ensured that children and young people were able to share any worries or concerns they may have had while away from the academy. Furthermore, leaders and managers sourced satellite accommodation, which enabled vulnerable children and young people to come back to the academy much earlier. Staff also facilitated a full online education timetable and online social forums for all children and young people to prevent them from becoming isolated. The academy has been nominated for several awards, which reflects the significant efforts and creative practice by leaders, managers and staff.

Leaders and managers are tenacious and committed. Their drive to promote best outcomes for children and young people is evident. The entire academy community presents as a large family. Staff know children and young people well and work closely together to provide a good standard of care. The children and young people's progress and achievement are closely monitored and celebrated.

Leaders and managers are strong advocates for children and young people to ensure that their voice is heard. Admissions are carefully considered, and additional training is facilitated for staff in line with children and young people's needs. This ensures that staff have the skills and knowledge required to promote the children and young people's best interests.

Leaders and managers have developed their own in-house resources to meet the needs of children and young people. However, numerous education, health and care (EHC) plans are out of timescales. Subsequent challenge to the relevant local authority is lacking. This does not ensure accountability and important external oversight.

Managers have not provided staff with the equipment to communicate with each other. Staff are currently using their own mobile phones to share information about children and young people. This means that information about children and young people is not securely shared. There is a plan to provide staff with work phones.

Shortfalls raised at the last inspection have been addressed and all national minimum standards are met.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure effective challenge to local authorities when EHC plans are out of date.
- Consider further ways to manage medication administration that minimise the risk of error.
- Ensure that care-planning documents promote risk management effectively.
- Ensure that recruitment processes include clear analysis when known risk is evident.
- Ensure that staff have work phones to support secure communication in the accommodation areas.

### **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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:** Sylvan Dewing

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Polly Soper, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Justine Hosking, Social Care Inspector

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