

Inspection of The Deaf Academy

Inspection dates:

15 to 17 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires Improvement

The quality of education

Requires Improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires Improvement

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires Improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires Improvement

Information about this provider

The Deaf Academy includes a school for pupils aged 5 to 18 and a college for students aged 16 and over. Both the school and college are based in a purpose-built site in Exmouth. The vast majority of students are profoundly deaf and use British sign language as their first language. Many students have additional needs which are barriers to learning.

All students have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and study individual programmes. The college offers day and residential provision. At the time of the visit, 38 students attended the college, 16 of which are aged 19 to 25 years, and a further 22 students aged 16 to 18 are funded and inspected as part of the school provision.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners feel safe and enjoy their time at college.

Learners appreciate the calm learning environment and proactive approach to promote good behaviour and attitudes to learning. For example, in sessions which are well organised, learners worked well and were keen to explain their understanding. Learners' interaction with staff and peers are positive and learners support each other well during activities.

Learners value the strong ethos placed on being part of the deaf community that supports them to develop their deaf identity. For many students, this is the first time they have not felt isolated in an educational setting. Instead, they are proud to be part of a community with a shared identity that equips them well with strategies to manage their hearing loss in the community.

Learners are encouraged to be active citizens in their local community. For example, learners take part in raising awareness of the British sign language (BSL) bill locally and nationally. They have co-developed a deaf awareness information pack for local employers to support their understanding of what it means to be deaf.

Learners benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as visits to local places of interest, sport and theatrical clubs. However, participation in voluntary enrichment activities is low and there are more limited opportunities for day students. In addition, a few students would like more activities that are specifically designed for college students to participate.

Learners receive effective careers guidance through weekly sessions where they explore their career options. As a result, most students are aware of their next steps and are developing employability skills through internal or external work placements. However, a few students have yet to explore their next steps and what they need to do to begin this transition.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have high aspirations for students to achieve the language, confidence and skills they need to progress to work or supported living. They recognise that there has previously been a culture of low expectations at the college. As such, they have focused on developing the curriculum intent to meet the changing needs of learners. However, although there have been significant changes, the pace of implementing improvements to the quality of the vocational and academic education since the previous inspection has not been rapid enough.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broadly structured to reflect their ambitions for learners. Where teachers have interpreted and understood this well, learners gain new knowledge and skills to prepare them for life after college. For example, teachers for

programmes such as skills for work and living and maths, have ensured that they are planned coherently and sequenced in a way that builds knowledge and skills over time. However, in other subject areas, teachers do not have a good enough understanding of what learners already know and can do at the start of their learning programmes to inform planning. Consequently, a small minority of learners do not access a curriculum that is sufficiently planned and individualised.

Leaders have focused rightly on improving the curriculum offer by ensuring that mathematics, English and BSL are at the core of the curriculum. As a result, a few students are achieving functional skills in literacy and higher qualifications in maths. This is supporting them to improve their fluency in BSL and achieving a BSL qualification at level 3. However, they have not ensured that the curriculum is ambitious enough for all learners. The curriculum is not yet sufficiently informed by the outcomes detailed in learners' EHC plans. Consequently, for a few learners, the structure of the curriculum is limiting what they can access and achieve.

The staff team comprises a few staff who are deaf, including in senior positions, that act as role models. Teachers have expert knowledge of working with deaf young people. Teachers have sound knowledge of the subjects they teach. As such, two teachers at the academy recently received national recognition for their creation of an innovative online curriculum during the pandemic.

The majority of teachers use different communication styles and languages to systematically check learners' understanding. However, a few teachers do not ensure the curriculum is fully accessible or sufficiently individualised to meet learners' needs. As a result, a few learners miss key information and are not enabled to be fully involved in the learning.

Although improved, leaders' systems for quality assuring the standards of teaching are not yet effective. They have rightly identified the need to further develop teachers to effectively plan and implement the curriculum, using learners' starting points. Additionally, teachers use of assessment to monitor learners' progress in knowing and remembering the curriculum content is not yet sufficiently developed. As a result, a few learners do not develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours to better prepare them for work and living more independently.

Leaders recognise the work of specialist therapists has not been effective in providing students with appropriate strategies to support their learning. They understand the impact of COVID-19 on the team but have been slow to recruit additional staff. Consequently, a significant few learners' needs are not being met as outlined in their EHC plans, as they do not have access to specific learning tools or communication aids which impacts on their ability to make progress towards their planned outcomes.

Managers and teachers have developed a clearly structured curriculum to develop learners' understanding of keeping safe and well, including healthy relationships. This supports them to develop the knowledge and skills to make positive choices as an adult. During tutor time, learners explore a broad range of topics, including democracy and understanding of the dangers online of radicalisation. For example,

learners have actively participated in campaigns to reduce local speed limits and save lives. However, staff frequently refer inappropriately to education as school. The language used by staff and students is not always appropriate to what one would expect for young adults studying in a further education setting.

Leaders actively seek opportunities to build partnerships with employers to develop the work experience offer. Learners recently took part in national careers week and met with a professional footballer to understand the demands of being a professional athlete. Learners also visited a football stadium to explore other employment opportunities related to the industry. However, not all students access relevant work experiences to support their aspirational career choices.

Governors are highly experienced within the education, care and charitable sectors. They use their experiences well to hold leaders to account. They recognise rightly that the standards of teaching and assessment is not yet good enough to impact on learners developing the knowledge and skills, to make swift progress, in line with their planned outcomes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have rightly focused on developing effective systems for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns following previous inspections. They have invested in an integrated safeguarding team which includes a social worker to support students' safety and welfare needs. Students understand how to report concerns about their welfare and safety in college.

The college site incorporates the school as part of the single-site academy. The school and college students have separated learning areas which have access control systems. However, leaders and governors do not fully recognise the implications for safeguarding children and young people, including adult students working alongside children in the school and college building. They recognise the benefits of children and young people learning from socialising together as part of the deaf community but do not adequately prioritise the potential risks. For example, risk assessments for shared areas such as the multi-use games area and atrium, identify generic health and safety risks and not potential risks associated with safeguarding.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure that learners benefit from an ambitious, well-planned, and well-taught coherent curriculum that enables learners to gain the new knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need to meet their planned outcomes.

- Leaders must ensure that teachers receive the appropriate training to plan and implement an effective curriculum to meet the needs of learners, including those with specific and more-complex learning needs.
- Leaders must develop teachers' understanding of planning the curriculum, using learners' starting points and the use of assessment to monitor learners' progress.
- Leaders must ensure that learners receive the educational and therapeutic support for which they are entitled to and as detailed in their EHC plans.
- Leaders must ensure that quality assurance processes are effective and lead to a consistently high quality of education for all learners.
- Leaders must take action to review risk assessments for shared areas and activities where pupils from the school and college students come together. This is to reassure themselves that children and young people are safe from risks.

Provider details

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Unique reference number | 132001 |
| Address | 1 Douglas Avenue Exmouth EX8 2AU |
| Contact number | 01395203130 |
| Website | https://thedeafacademy.ac.uk |
| Principal/CEO | Sylvan Dewing |
| Provider type | Independent Specialist College |
| Date of previous inspection | 15 to 17 January 2019 |
| Main subcontractors | None |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-evaluation report and development plan, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the further education and skills inspection handbook and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Tina Pagett, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Esther Williams | Ofsted Inspector |
| Tracey Griffin | Ofsted Inspector |
| Louise Rowley | Ofsted Inspector |

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

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.

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 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.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022