

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 deaf students. This inspection concerns the residential provision only. The residential provision is located within the school grounds.

The statement of purpose states that the majority of students have at least one additional physical, learning, social, emotional, mental health or medical need.

The academy and residential provision relocated from Exeter to new facilities in Exmouth in September 2020.

The residential provision currently accommodates 33 students, 20 of whom are under the age of 18.

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 October 2022

Overall experiences and progress of students and young people, taking into account requires improvement to be good

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for students and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 21 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of students and young people: requires improvement to be good

Overall, staff support students in all aspects of their lives to help them to achieve realistic goals. There is a focus on how to help students to find their deaf identity and to gain the skills needed to live independently.

Staff continue to support students into young adulthood after they leave the academy. This helps them to find employment or further education and to settle in the community. However, managers and staff are adjusting to an increase in the numbers and needs of student's staying in residential accommodation. Leaders feel that the academy is still recovering from the impact of COVID-19. This has affected the staff's well-being and availability to meet some student's wider goals.

Students are happy and live in bright, modern accommodation which is kept to a high standard. They each have their own bedroom, which is warm and personalised. They form friendship groups and socialise between flats, sharing meals and activities. Staff listen to student's views; for example, students plan activities and weekly menus. However, staff do not always consider student's views. For example, monitoring of student's diets is not consistent or properly recorded.

Student's health needs are met by a specialist team to help their physical and emotional health. A multi-disciplinary team reviews each child's progress and produces individualised termly newsletters for families and professionals.

Leaders and managers have high aspirations for the academy and celebrate its achievements. They put forward students and staff for national awards, including 'Teaching Assistant of the Year' and the 'Students Voice' award. This celebrates how students and staff are making a positive difference in the deaf community.

How well students and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have put safeguarding and child protection procedures in place. Staff have access to a welfare team who are highly skilled and recognised as a good in-house resource. Students are also able to approach the welfare team and receive advice, including mental health support.

Restraint is rarely used and recording of restraint is clear and actions are appropriate to support students.

There is a robust safer recruitment process in place. Leaders and managers carefully risk assess any positive criminal disclosures before employing staff.

Student's care plans do not always highlight the most recent issues and staff can miss some key information. For example, care plans do not accurately set out when a child needs more staff supervision.

Managers and staff's response to incidents is not always consistent. Leaders recognise the need to update procedures and to apply lower safeguarding thresholds for referrals to other agencies.

Staff and students have respectful and trusting relationships with each other. This helps students to manage their own behaviour and risks. On the downside, it means that staff are not aware that filters on computer equipment are insufficient to block some unsuitable content. It also means that staff do not hold a clear record of the whereabouts of each students they leave the accommodation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have an open approach and are quick to address any identified concerns, using achievable action plans. They have high expectations and aspirations for the academy community. Leaders seek external advice and share good practice to help make improvements to student's experiences.

Managers support staff to provide highly skilled care to students. There is a comprehensive development programme which managers regularly review to keep staff up to date.

Managers track student's progress and provide them with realistic goals to build their confidence and resilience. However, some care plans for new students are brief and do not always highlight known issues. This reduces staff's ability to meet all those student's needs effectively.

Leaders and managers listen to staff and encourage open and honest feedback on issues that affect them. However, staff require more support and time to put in place recent changes and to settle in their roles. This will help them to meet student's needs effectively, for example, to support students to have additional activities in the community as part of their independence goals.

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should prepare a student's version of the statement of purpose, which is communicated to them using appropriate methods.
- School leaders should ensure care planning documents remain up to date and promote risk management effectively.
- School leaders should ensure the diets of all students, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are monitored, and include nutritionally balanced meals.
- School leaders should ensure that arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of students, including in relation to online safety, have regard to internal policies and 'Keeping Students Safe in Education 2022'.
- School leaders should ensure that there are sufficient staff deployed to fulfil the statement of purpose and meet the individual needs of students.
- School leaders should ensure that staff have access to relevant support and advice for their role.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of students and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Students 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

Telephone number: 01395 203130

Email address: reception@thedeafacademy.ac.uk

Inspectors

Justine Hosking, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Paula Lahey, Regulatory Inspection Manager

The Office for Standards in Education, Students's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of students and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and students's social care, and inspects the Students 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 students's services, and inspects services for students 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 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022