

Royal School for the Deaf Derby

Royal School for the Deaf, 180 Ashbourne Road, DERBY DE22 3BH

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The Royal School for the Deaf Derby is a non-maintained, residential special school. There are 103 pupils on roll, whose ages range from three to 22. All pupils have an education, health and care plan for hearing impairment, and some have complex special needs. The residential service operates on weekdays only, as all children and young people go home at weekends. There are 16 pupils who stay at the school during the week, on a full-time or part-time basis. The residential accommodation is provided across two residential facilities that are purpose-built blocks. The school is a signing and speaking community. The school is situated in the city of Derby.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 March 2023

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

How well children 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 provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 29 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff know the children well and have warm and nurturing relationships with them. This means children will communicate with staff when they are upset or have concerns.

The positive relationships staff have with children encourage them to become increasingly independent. Consequently, older children are attending college, managing their own money and travelling independently. Children learn and develop new skills. This enhances their life skills, teaches them how to form and maintain positive relationships and is helping them to make progress with their academic development.

Children make good progress from their initial starting points. They are supported and encouraged to select the targets they wish to work towards in relation to independent living skills. Targets are carefully tracked through a skills-review system. This is a traffic light, colour-coded system that children have access to. This visual document motivates children to make progress.

Children enjoy being with their friends in the residential provision. A child said: 'It feels like a second family.' Some children can only access the deaf community by accessing the school. Parents who can hear, say that this is of great benefit to their child because their child feels less isolated. Additionally, these parents and the extended family can access the school for lessons in British sign language. This enables them to communicate better with their children.

Children are encouraged to have high aspirations and not see their deafness as a barrier to communication or learning. For example, an opportunity has been planned for children to present the BBC weather. Additionally, children have joined a local theatre group and will be putting on a performance.

Children's views, wishes and feelings are valued and respected. Staff are competent in supporting children with their sign language to ensure that their voices are heard.

Children are helped to understand about important issues such as consent, safe relationships and recognising indicators of harmful relationships. Skilled external professionals visit the residential houses to present workshops after school. Staff support the children with communication during these sessions. This supports children with their understanding of the content of the workshops.

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

Staff have a good understanding of children's safety needs. They know the children and their families well. This helps to keep children safer. However, there are concerns about

record keeping, risk assessments and the reporting of an emerging concern to external safeguarding agencies.

Risk assessments are not comprehensive. Updated risk assessments have not been shared with the staff team. This means staff do not have the most up-to-date information about the children. For example, one risk assessment failed to reflect the increased risks of a child's vulnerability to bullying. Others did not identify the risks of young adults transferring into the residential areas where children who are under 18 reside. Assessments failed to identify all risks and did not provide guidance on how to manage these. Despite this, staff's practice has safeguarded children.

Significant concerns were raised by a parent about the safety of her child. The concerns related to rumours, rather than fact. The designated safeguarding lead did not inform external agencies about the concerns the parent raised. Additionally, these concerns and others about the same child were not discussed within the weekly safeguarding meetings. The headteacher says that the concerns were discussed more informally, and they have a good understanding of the concerns raised. By not informing external agencies about serious concerns and not formalising the safeguarding process within the school, vital information about the safety of children could be missed or lost, and children could be left at risk of harm.

Children say that bullying is not an issue at this school. However, there have been some reported incidents of bullying between children. Staff have responded quickly to allegations of bullying but have not always reported these low-level concerns on the safeguarding reporting system. This hinders management oversight and means that the school does not have a complete chronology of concerns.

Allegations of bullying for one child have not always been considered as safeguarding concerns. The child wrote a letter to the school explaining that she felt isolated and consequently placed herself at risk by leaving the school. Leaders have worked with safeguarding agencies more recently to support the child to return to school.

Records of safeguarding concerns are not detailed enough. For example, actions taken regarding referrals to external agencies are not recorded. It is important to have clear and detailed safeguarding records to ensure clarity around actions that need to be taken and potential escalation to a criminal case.

Children receive structured care with consistent boundaries and clear expectations from the staff. They benefit from established routines that are thoroughly embedded in their daily lives. This helps them to feel safe and secure.

Staff understand children's vulnerabilities when they use the internet and social media platforms. They work in partnership with professionals to deliver bespoke training to meet children's individual needs and vulnerabilities. In addition, staff educate children through key-work sessions about the dangers and safe use of the internet, preparing them well for adulthood. This helps to keep children safe when they are using online platforms. Staff have good oversight of social media use to ensure children's safety.

Most fire doors to bedrooms shut too quickly. The maintenance staff were asked to rectify this immediately.

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

A new headteacher has been appointed. He is ably supported by the deputy head (care and guidance), who takes responsibility as the designated safeguarding lead and the leader of the residential provision. He is qualified and experienced.

Management monitoring systems are not yet robust. The systems have not supported the manager to identify shortfalls in some safeguarding records and risk assessments. This hinders their ability to oversee the quality of care, practice and outcomes for children. The newly appointed headteacher has a good understanding of the shortfalls and has plans to improve recording systems.

Management oversight of materials published on the website has not been quality assured effectively. This has meant that a video of a child signing part of the statement of purpose has been published on the school's website while a staff member can be heard talking in the background and being disrespectful about the school. The video was removed from the website once inspectors had made leaders aware of it.

The independent visitor reports are detailed and provide a good overview of the residential provision. However, the independent visitor's evaluation of the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded is not always clear within the reports. Additionally, the independent visitor has recently reviewed the statement of purpose that is published on the school's website and said it is compliant. The independent visitor has not identified the concerns in relation to a member of staff speaking in the background while children are signing on a video.

Formal quality-assurance processes of day and night practice in the residential provision do not yet occur. This would strengthen quality-assurance processes.

Leaders, managers, and staff are strong advocates for deaf children and the deaf community. For example, the school hosts different events for and on behalf of the local deaf community and invites deaf role models into the school to share inspirational stories with the children. Managers have ensured that staff have undertaken a high level of child-specific training, together with all the required mandatory training. This provides staff with the skills and knowledge they need to meet the complex needs of the children.

Staff feel supported and enjoy their work. Staff retention is good, and morale is high. This results in a warm and inviting homely environment, where children have flourished. A member of staff said: 'We as a staff team like nothing better than to

watch all children grow and achieve their individual best. They all have lovely personalities, which we watch develop over the time they are with us.'

Governors are passionate about the school and are critical advocates. They regularly visit the residential provision, ensuring oversight of services and spending time with children and staff to seek their views and wishes.

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 standard(s) for residential special schools:

- 13.1 The school should ensure that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Points to improve

- Strengthen quality-assurance systems within the residential provision. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.5)
- Ensure that the report written by the independent visitor provides an evaluation of the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 3.2)
- Strengthen health and safety systems to ensure that children are not exposed to risk. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 14.2)

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: SC002015

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Paul Burrows

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01332 362512

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Inspectors

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

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