

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 96 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 13 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 in purpose-built blocks. The school is a signing and speaking community. The school is situated in the city of Derby.

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

Inspection dates: 30 January to 1 February 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 14 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children benefit from exceptionally good relationships with staff, who know them incredibly well. The staff are highly skilled. They nurture the children and provide emotional warmth. Staff are excellent role models for the children. Their interactions with each other and the children create a calm atmosphere. The children are happy, settled and secure.

Children thoroughly enjoy the company of staff and mealtimes are seen as an opportunity to spend valuable time together. A number of children said, 'Staff are supportive, kind, caring and the best!'

Children have positive experiences during their stays and have fun. Staff use the home's resources and those in the wider community very well to provide positive experiences. Children have a wide range of opportunities to engage in activities and to develop independence skills. They also build an increased sense of identity, belonging and being part of their own community. This reduces the isolation they experience in other settings.

When children stay at the homes, the staff ensure that their health needs are met. This is supported by close working with parents. Staff are very attuned to the emotional well-being of children. Staff have regular one-to-one and group discussions with children, who are able to communicate their views, wishes and feelings, and staff respond to these without delay. Children feel able to talk about their problems and staff feel able to instigate difficult conversations with children to explore issues sensitively. These discussions are meaningful and help children to feel heard and understood. They also help children to work through their feelings and emotions and build resilience. This work is supported by a deaf art therapist, whose input is greatly valued.

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. The education and care staff have a seamless approach to supporting and caring for children. As a result, children are able to flourish and are supported in their aspirations for the future. One professional from the school said, 'We are enablers.' Children's barriers to reaching their educational potential are overcome.

The value of friendship is recognised as being very important for the children. Children know that they are able to invite their friends over from school into the home as they are encouraged to see the residence as their home. This supports friendships to flourish and strengthens the children's bonds with each other. One parent said, 'Out of school [my child] doesn't have any friends, but has such a fantastic group of friends there. They get to have so many new and exciting experiences together. We couldn't ask for more.'

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

Staffing levels are high, which helps to keep children safe. The manager ensures that the right number of staff support each child, to enable them to meet children's individual needs effectively. For example, there are always two members of staff involved when children's health procedures are carried out. Children are safer because of good planning for the use of resources.

Children enjoy using their phones and tablets and are kept safe online. Staff help children to learn through multimedia platforms about the risks they may be exposed to. Effective measures are in place to safeguard children in their use of electronic devices. Concerns about online safety are promptly identified and are managed effectively.

Staff have been recruited safely. Thorough inductions take place for new staff. All new starters complete a comprehensive development plan before they can pass their probation. This ensures they have understood their learning and are competent in their role. All staff are up to date with mandatory training, such as safeguarding. They have also undertaken additional training to meet each child's individual needs. This ensures staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to keep children safe.

Risk assessments are of varying standards, however, leaders are taking action to rectify this to ensure that they are all completed to the same standard. Nevertheless, the staff understand each child's risks and vulnerabilities and how they need to be supported. This is a result of close working relationships and a stable staff team.

Since the last inspection, there have been no incidents of children going missing from home. Children feel safe and have a sense of belonging.

There have been no physical interventions since May 2018. Staff help and support children to learn how to regulate their own behaviours. They are effective in understanding the emotions that can trigger certain behaviours, and this is documented in the children's records. This helps to reduce incidents.

Safeguarding incidents are dealt with robustly. Appropriate action is taken to ensure that children are safeguarded effectively. Relevant agencies are promptly informed and the correct procedures are followed. Poor and unsafe practice is challenged and addressed. This ensures that children are kept safe, and standards of practice remain good.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are passionate, dedicated and inspirational. There have been significant changes in the leadership team since the last inspection. However, action has been taken to ensure this has not impacted children and there has been a seamless approach to the changes that have been made.

There is a newly appointed head of residence, who had been in post for four weeks at the time of the inspection. She has already established firm working relationships with others in the senior leadership team, as well as with the staff in residence and the children. Despite staff's initial concerns over changes in the management team, they say they feel well supported and are complimentary about the impact this has already had.

The leadership team has a clear vision for the homes. They are driving improvements with a clear objective of excelling in the care they provide for children. Some electronic information systems are newly implemented and therefore it is too early to evaluate their impact.

Staff say that they enjoy working at the home and that team morale is the best it has ever been. This in turn creates a happy and harmonious environment for children. Team meetings for staff take place regularly, along with weekly welfare meetings. These sessions promote staff's understanding of children's behaviours. This helps staff to gain a deeper insight into children's needs. It also promotes coordinated care and is an opportunity for team building.

There is an established team of staff who care deeply about the children in the home. They have access to good training opportunities which ensure that they maintain the skills and knowledge they require to meet children's health and care needs.

Leaders use the independent visitor's reports to regularly assess the difference the service is making for children. As a result, they have a very clear understanding of how to support children to make continued progress.

Leaders have a shared vision to raise the awareness of the deaf culture and heritage, and to prepare children for 'life beyond the school gate'. This is helping children to overcome the isolation and barriers they may experience.

Leaders have been proactive in establishing links with the community to strengthen awareness locally of the deaf community. There have been a number of recent community events, for example:

- A performance at Derby Cathedral.
- Work with a local theatre production company.
- Parents have been welcomed into school to support their understanding and knowledge of online safety for children.
- Continuing to provide BSL (British sign language) classes for children's parents and family members. In addition, they are now extending the BSL programme to the local fire brigade and the High Sheriff of Derbyshire.
- Ongoing work with NPSCC to make their resources deaf-friendly.

- Planning to present the weather on BBC local news during Deaf Awareness Week.

All these activities create opportunities for children and further strengthen their inclusion in the community.

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: Paul Burrows

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

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