

# Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Inspection report

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## Contents

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Background information	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement	7
Main findings	9

## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. The Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education comprises a school for pupils aged 5–16, a college for students aged 16+ and an educational development department which serves the needs of the students and the external community through extended, outreach services. The Academy offers residential and day placements. Approximately 95% of the learners are profoundly deaf and the Academy increasingly includes learners with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities and emotional and behavioural needs. Placements are usually funded by local councils and for some 16+ learners are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There are currently 32 learners funded by the LSC, 4 funded privately and 40 funded by their local council. Learners follow individual learning programmes and share the same curriculum entitlement. A separate school inspection report includes a sixth form section for those learners funded by the local council.
2. The Academy is committed to the development of both English and British Sign Language (BSL). Where necessary, symbol systems are used to provide additional support for students. Within the college most learners join at 16+; ability levels are varied ranging from potential university learners to those with additional and complex learning needs. Tutors provide signing classes for learners, staff and those in the local community in the evening. Teachers of the Deaf, communication support workers, speech and language therapists, an audiologist and sign language tutors all contribute their expertise and experience for the benefit of the students and the wider community. By using the local colleges of general further education (FE), many 16+ students have the opportunity, with the support of staff from the Academy, to access a range of courses that prepare them for their chosen career.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: contributory grade 3</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

3. This is a satisfactory college. Learners' achievement and the quality of their work across the curriculum are satisfactory. With support provided by the college, over half of the learners attend courses at two local general FE colleges. They gain a wide range of level 2 and level 3 academic and vocational qualifications. Communication skills improve significantly for those learners who had little or no signing abilities before commencing at the college. Work related skills are enhanced well through learners' work experience placements and on vocational and practical courses.
4. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Learners enjoy their education and training and make good gains in confidence and communication to enable them to progress onto general FE courses and employment. Much of the good teaching is found in the practical lessons. Planning for learning is not always effectively matched to individual learner needs. Targets, other than for those studying for nationally accredited awards, are in many cases insufficiently precise. Learner progress is not sufficiently recorded and the achievement of learners is not adequately analysed.
5. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good as is meeting the needs and interests of learners. The promotion of equality, diversity and respect for individuals underpins all college activities and issues of deaf culture are well promoted. Learners have good access to a wide range of nationally accredited awards and vocational courses through well developed partnerships with local colleges and community activities. Literacy and numeracy opportunities are insufficiently integrated across the curriculum and the quality of risk assessments is too variable.
6. Advice, support and guidance for learners are satisfactory. Support for individual learners is particularly good, especially for those attending local general FE colleges. Tutorials are effective in supporting learners' academic and vocational achievement. Learners benefit from the range of specialist support services available on site. Safeguarding procedures are in place but not always strictly followed to ensure all new members of staff have their qualifications vetted appropriately. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has a clear strategic direction and knows what it needs to do to improve further; there are very effective working relationships with external partners and local community groups. Quality assurance and self-assessment processes lack sufficient rigour. The college promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. However, the response to the most recent equalities legislation has been too slow. Governors are not sufficiently informed to fully discharge their duties adequately.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. The college has maintained the strengths identified in the last inspection. The roles of senior managers are more clearly defined. New initiatives and the focus on staff development and training to improve the quality of provision are starting to impact and the quality of support provided to learners has much improved. Staff are very positive about the open and supportive leadership and management and morale is high. The expertise and roles of governors in providing critical support to senior managers have improved although reporting systems are not yet fully in place to ensure satisfactory governance. Quality assurance and self-assessment processes lack sufficient rigour. However, quality improvement plans identify main areas for improvement and actions are carefully monitored through senior management meetings. Financial management is satisfactory.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

8. The college has maintained learners' achievement during a period of expansion of learner numbers, many with additional and complex learning needs. Satisfactory progress has been made in most areas identified by the last inspection. Assessment processes are more comprehensive. There is a clear strategic and operational focus on post-sixteen provision. Procedures to improve the monitoring and measurement of learners' progress have been implemented. However, quality assurance processes are underdeveloped especially in relation to teaching and learning and the college's response to the most recent equalities legislation has been too slow.

Key strengths

- good achievement of qualifications
- gains made in learners' confidence and communication skills
- good range of vocational programmes leading to qualifications and good internal progression routes
- comprehensive range of enrichment activities
- very good support for learning
- clear strategic direction
- highly effective partnership working with local FE colleges and community groups.

Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the planning of learning matched to individual learner needs
- the quality of target setting and recording of learner progress
- the effective integration of literacy and numeracy within all curriculum activities
- the implementation of the safeguarding procedures
- the application of the quality assurance processes

- the rigour of self-assessment
- the slow response to most recent equalities legislation
- governance.



## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. Learners' achievement and the standards of their work are satisfactory overall. The college's self-assessment report overestimated this area and judged it to be good. With support provided by the college, over half of the learners attend courses at two local general FE colleges. They gain a wide range of level 2 and level 3 academic and vocational qualifications. The standard of learners' work is good and meets course requirements. Within the college learners follow pre-entry, entry and level 1 courses and achieve relevant qualifications; they increase in confidence and gain the necessary independence and social skills for moving onto mainstream FE courses. Learners' achievement is well recognised and they enjoy achieving additional accredited awards and certificates. These include awards in information and communication technology (ICT) and basic skills. There are high participation rates in enrichment activities and learners achieve certificates in a range of sporting and leisure events.
10. Functional literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactorily developed when embedded into practical activities. For example, within vocational training and when learners practise independence skills such as cooking, shopping and budgeting for items and travelling independently. However, there is minimal information about how well their basic skills improve over time or how these contribute to their economic well-being. Communication skills improve significantly for those learners who had little or no signing abilities before commencing at the college. Work related skills are enhanced through work experience placements and on vocational and practical courses. However, these skills are not adequately recorded and so it is not possible to evaluate progress over time.
11. The college adequately sets and monitors targets for the achievement of qualifications but progress in relation to learners' personal development are less well recorded. The extent to which learners make progress above expectations is insufficiently evaluated. The college does not yet collect or analyse information about the achievement of learners with different types of learning disability, such as for those who have autistic spectrum disorders. Destination outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Retention rates are high and in line with other similar independent specialist colleges. Attendance and punctuality rates are good.

### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

12. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The self-assessment report did not provide an overall grade for teaching and learning. Much of the good teaching is found in the practical lessons in college, and in the vocational provision within the partner general FE colleges. In these lessons learners are actively engaged in their learning, understand what is expected of them and participate well in the tasks set. There are good relationships between teachers,

- communication support workers and learners that facilitate and improve communication skills and promote appropriate behaviour. Lessons are planned to meet individual learning needs and teachers are skilled in maintaining learners' motivation by providing interesting materials and activities and by carefully checking that learning is taking place. In the less well planned lessons, teaching is not sufficiently matched to the learners' individual needs. This is often because teachers plan activities that are inappropriate, such as whole class work or several groups carrying out the same task regardless of the individual needs of learners. In one lesson observed the teacher talked for long periods of time with insufficient checking of learners' understanding. In other lessons learners carried out inappropriate activities such as tracing over letters of the alphabet.
13. Initial and baseline assessment are satisfactory and improving. They contain comprehensive information related to individual support needs but are not yet effectively used to identify targets for learners' achievement. Targets, other than for those who are studying for external awards, are in many cases insufficiently precise. This makes the ongoing monitoring of individual learners' progress difficult. Learners' work is assessed and marked regularly. They receive appropriate and constructive feedback on progress against the criteria set for external awards.
  14. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion and in meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The college overestimated the quality of this area as outstanding. The promotion of equality, diversity and respect for individuals underpins all college activities and issues of deaf culture are well promoted. The number of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is, at 17%, high for independent specialist colleges. Induction activities provide a good introduction to college life. Learners have good access to a wide range of external awards and vocational courses. There are well developed partnerships with local FE colleges and community groups. Learners can move to more appropriate programme areas according to their individual need and long term goals. Links with work and other learning providers are good.
  15. Comprehensive work-experience programmes are appropriately linked to vocational programmes. The role of the employment co-ordinator has strengthened work-related learning, careers guidance, work-experience and job coaching for employers. Community presence and participation are good. The college plays a leading role in developing and promoting deaf culture, for example learners support BSL teaching delivered in the local community. Learners make a positive contribution to the community through fund raising activities for various charities such as hearing dogs and the NSPCC Fatherhood Project. Learners value the comprehensive range of enrichment activities and varied programme of sporting and leisure activities offered by the college. Good attention is given to promoting the learner voice but there is no formal learner involvement strategy or action plan. Literacy and numeracy opportunities are insufficiently integrated across the curriculum.
  16. Support and guidance are satisfactory. The college inaccurately judges support and guidance to be outstanding. The college provides good access to an

audiologist, speech and language therapists, counselling from experienced staff and occupational therapy and physiotherapy. This range of therapies supports communication and learning very effectively. Initial and baseline assessment processes are comprehensive and include additional assessment for mental health issues. Additional support for learners with behavioural issues is managed well and promotes increased independence. The tutorial system is responsive to learners' academic and pastoral needs.

17. The very good support provided by teachers of the deaf and communication support workers to learners attending general FE college provision is well managed and matched to learners' individual needs well. Support provided to learners within the college is, in a minority of occasions, over directive. Induction processes are satisfactory. Learners know where to obtain support and advice and make effective use of services offered. Arrangements to promote the safety and well-being of individual learners are adequate but the quality of risk assessments is too variable. Safeguarding measures are in place but recruitment and vetting procedures are not always rigorously followed to ensure compliance with current guidance and best practice.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Satisfactory: grade 3*

18. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college overestimates this area and judged it to be good. The college has a clear vision which is successfully steered by the chief executive. Partnership working with other providers and local organisations within the deaf and wider community has improved and is very effective. The senior management team has been strengthened and managers' roles and responsibilities are more clearly defined. Communication and reporting systems are being successfully implemented and the senior management team meet regularly to monitor ongoing improvements to provision.
19. Quality assurance processes are underdeveloped. Although the quality of some important aspects of provision are carefully monitored, such as the support provided to learners, the monitoring and evaluation of other key areas such as teaching and learning, assessment processes, target setting and recording of progress lack rigour. Management information systems are improving but do not yet provide sufficient evidence or data to support the college's analysis of how well it is raising standards. Self-assessment is satisfactory overall. Processes have improved and involve all staff in evaluating the quality of provision. The self-assessment report successfully identifies the main areas for improvement. However, there are not enough evaluative judgements substantiated by robust evidence.
20. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The college has done much good work through its very effective community partnerships with other providers and local organisations in raising deaf awareness and in ensuring

deaf students are included within mainstream provision and within the community as a whole. At 17%, the college has a high proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds and its recruitment procedures for staff and learners are appropriately anti-discriminatory. The college's response to most recent equalities legislation and guidance has been too slow. It has updated its equality and diversity policy and procedure and the equalities and diversity committee meets once a term. The committee has succeeded in improving some aspects of provision and influencing college decision making. However, the analysis of achievement data in relation to the achievement of different groups of learners is insufficient. Impact assessments of policies and procedures are not in place and action planning to ensure further improvement are not adequately monitored.

21. Staff development and training are comprehensive. Staff value managers' quick response in providing for their individual training and development needs. Staff skills and expertise have improved significantly in relation to BSL, which is having a major positive impact on the quality of communication support provided to learners. The performance management of staff has improved and staff are very positive about the open and supportive management styles of managers. Staff development in relation to target setting and recording of student progress is insufficient.
22. Governors are very supportive. Improvements to the composition and functions of the governing body have recently been undertaken. However, governors do not yet receive sufficient information about the college in relation to how well learners achieve and how successfully equal opportunities are being promoted, to enable them to adequately discharge their duties.
23. The quality of learning resources and teaching accommodation is satisfactory overall. The college has made significant financial investments in improving workshops, kitchen facilities and ICT. However, managers recognise that improving the overall accessibility of the site for learners with physical disabilities is difficult and plans are in place for major building work to commence by 2011. Financial management is satisfactory. Managers are involved in setting and managing budgets for resources. Staff report they have sufficient resources to perform their roles. However, the monitoring of individual learner schedules for LSC funded learners, to ensure their programme requirements are being met, have yet to be implemented. The college provides satisfactory value for money.