

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The Deaf Academy provides aspirational education and residential care which enables Deaf children and young people to achieve successful outcomes in a safe and nurturing environment. The Academy operates a non-maintained residential special school for Deaf children and young people between the ages of 4 – 19 and a specialist post-16 college for Deaf young people aged 16 – 25.

The Academy is a national resource for students coming from all across the UK supporting who are Deaf. The majority of our students have at least one additional physical, learning, social, emotional, mental health or medical need. An increasing number of students have multiple needs which requires specialist teaching and therapeutic support to enable them to access education and to make good progress.

Many of our students will have developed low self-esteem and lack confidence in themselves as learners prior to arrival because of a sense of isolation from Deaf peers and a Deaf community. It is the academy's aim to provide an inclusive environment where children and young people are immersed within a Deaf community.

Education and residential care is provided within a sign-bilingual community where the languages and cultures of both Deaf and Hearing people are valued equally. Children and young people are supported to develop their skills and abilities so that they can realise their aspirations and lead successful and fulfilled adult lives.

For some, the aspiration will be the development of independent living skills and the ability to lead a supported life with increasing levels of independence. For others their aspiration will be to gain formal qualifications and skills that will enable progression to further or higher education, independent and successful careers.

The development of Deaf identity and an opportunity to learn about Deaf culture, to be inspired by successful Deaf role models and to develop a sense of empowerment as Deaf citizens is central to the curriculum and ethos of the Academy.

Just over half our students benefit from residential provision which enables them to participate fully in the learning community and to further develop their learning, confidence and independent living skills.

## **LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION**

We provide a sign-bilingual communication environment, taking account of students' individual needs and preferred mode of communication. We recognise that for the majority of our children and young people, BSL is their preferred and dominant language; BSL is therefore, used to access the curriculum, maximising social, emotional and cognitive development. We aim for each student to achieve their potential in both BSL and English and become confident communicators. Alongside the teaching of BSL, the teaching of English is given emphasis in the curriculum.

British Sign Language (BSL) is taught by qualified deaf adults. It is used to develop language, concepts and social skills. The BSL tutor links with the Speech and Language Therapists and English teachers to assess and improve social use of language. Students are encouraged to use their hearing aids to maximise their potential use of residual hearing (taking into account individual abilities, needs and circumstances).

Augmentative and alternative communication forms are used to enhance communication for some students, e.g. Cued Speech, Finger Spelling, Deaf/Blind Manual Alphabet.

## **SCHOOL - CURRICULUM**

Students are taught in small class groups usually between three and seven students with at least one Teaching Assistant per class. As far as possible students are grouped according to age and ability as well as considering their social and emotional needs. The curriculum is broad and balanced, rich, varied and inclusive with many opportunities for active and experiential learning. The curriculum is being designed to reflect three core strands: Language, Literacy and Communication, Learning About Myself and Others and, Learning About the Wider World. Links with the community and the world of work feature widely on the curriculum. At KS4, some students are able to join partner Schools and Colleges to take GCSEs or vocational options not offered at the Academy.

Our Primary class, years 7 -9 students and those with more complex needs may spend a larger proportion of time with their class tutor to give them greater continuity and stability. We have developed our curriculum for primary and key-stage three students with a more thematic approach to learning by following the EQUALS curriculum.

Emphasis in the curriculum is given to English, BSL, PSHE & Citizenship due to the pupils' special needs with regard to communication, language development and personal and social development. Each student in school has a minimum of four BSL lessons a week.

The school caters for students with a broad range of ability from those functioning at a developmental level to those accessing accreditation at GCSE. We are able to offer a range of accredited courses in Key Stage 3 and 4 appropriate to the needs of all pupils.

## **SPECIALIST POST-16 COLLEGE - CURRICULUM**

Post-16 curriculum offers three distinct strands: Preparing for Adulthood, Pathfinders, Partner Pathways programme and Supported Internships.

The Preparing for Adulthood provides a broader general vocational and preparation for living skills programme. The objective for of this programme is to develop students' awareness of vocational options, their own skills and preferences and to enable them to make informed choices about further vocational training. The programme also includes an Independent Living Skills Programme which covers areas such as personal hygiene, meals, money management, social behaviour and independent travel.

The Pathfinders Programme is for those students who are ready to access more focused courses, often in partnership with other providers alongside a core curriculum which continues to develop language and communication, functional maths and personal, social and health education. Students also participate in Work experience for one day a week.

The Partner Pathway students access courses at local colleges with support from our qualified staff - Communication Support Workers (minimum L2 BSL) and a GFE Tutor, typically a qualified Teacher of the Deaf. The courses taken include GCSEs, NVQs, 'A' and 'AS' Levels, Vocational 'A' levels and National Diplomas. Students have additional tutorial sessions with both Communication Support Workers and tutor, which include pre and post teaching in preparation for their course. Students also have the option to participate in maths, English, PSHE, BSL and Work experience.

The Supported Internship programme is to prepare students for employment. Each Student has three days in a work place in the career that they wish to follow in. A Job Coach supports the student in the work place with employability skills to prepare them for employment. At the academy they follow a

core curriculum which continues to develop their language and communication, functional maths and personal, Social and Health education as well as employability skills.

### **RESIDENTIAL CARE**

The Academy is set in twelve acres of grounds overlooking the River Exe close to the city centre and only a few miles from sea and open countryside. All residential student accommodation is within the Academy twelve-acre site, and provides a range of opportunities and activities according to individual need. Students are encouraged to personalise their own bedrooms and to contribute ideas on how to make the shared living areas more 'homely'.

The academy provides two provisions; Children's care and Adult care with specialist staff offering accommodation for 38 weeks of the year. Residential care staff acknowledge that our Deaf young people have additional challenges in their lives and need support to manage and self-regulate their behaviour. These Young People may not have the language skills, cognitive ability or life skills to fully express themselves or understand the complexities of building positive relationships. The use of PACE principles requires that staff approach from the perspective of understanding what is happening for the young person in distress.

#### **What is a PACE attitude?**

- Playful – using an open, spontaneous playful stance; using a story telling voice/facial expressions rather than a lecturing voice/facial expressions. This creates a safe space where the young person can tell their story without feeling judged and where they are encouraged to explore.
- Acceptance - of the young person's internal perspective. Whether or not you personally agree with the young person's behaviour, this is about accepting the thoughts, feelings, wishes and perceptions of the young person, recognising them to be valid as they are their perceived reality.
- Curiosity – exploring the cause of the poor behaviour with non-judgemental questions to understand their motives. So instead of saying 'Why did you do that?' – Which implies criticism, you might say 'I wonder where you learnt that?' or 'Help me to understand why that is...'
- Empathy – making sense of and experiencing the internal world of the young person and how they experience what is happening. To be empathetic, you have to be able to feel with them, to genuinely connect with the bad feelings they are experiencing.

The purpose of PACE is to enable staff to have a conversation with young people who have experienced trauma, which:

- helps the young person to express him or herself
- helps the young person to understand his/her emotions
- enables staff and young people to have a shared understanding of the young person's actions.

Our Children's provision provides warm and nurturing care for children and young people who are living away from home during their time in education. The team work to support children and young

people develop their Deaf identities as well as their independent living skills in a safe and homely environment.

Our Adult provision aims to support young people and adults to develop further on independent living skills to prepare them for adulthood and independence. The team provide a range of enrichment activities within the academy and in the local community to support and develop independent living skills and personal and social development. The Academy will be relocating in Spring 2020 to a new bespoke campus in nearby Exmouth. Residential accommodation on the new site has been designed to provide a nurturing, homely environment whilst also promoting and enabling independent living. Modern bedrooms will be in clusters around high spec shared living spaces providing a sense of belonging to a 'family' in a place which feels like home.

### **SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION**

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (The Academy) recognises our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students. We provide a safe and welcoming environment where students are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that all students receive support, protection and justice.

We recognise that students who are deaf are at an increased risk of abuse and harm, their deafness may also mean that they have difficulties in communicating their concerns to adults. We will be mindful of these challenges in our responses, and seek to promote a culture of friendly, open communication so that concerns can quickly be raised. It is our objective to safeguard all our students across The Academy and to provide the support they need to achieve this - whatever their background or circumstances.

The Academy employs a dedicated Safeguarding Team which includes a registered social worker. This enables us to quickly and effectively respond to concerns surrounding our student's welfare and work as a part of a multiagency team to protect students from harm. Inclusion Officers working as part of this team are across both education and residential care, they are available to provide additional support and can quickly act on welfare or safeguarding concerns.

The Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy and Procedures are available on our website.

### **APPROACH TO BEHAVIOUR**

At the Academy we are committed to creating an environment in which all Deaf children and young people can flourish and feel safe.

Our prime concern is always student's welfare and achievements, whilst maintaining a purposeful and caring learning environment. We believe that everyone has the right to feel safe and to be treated with respect and compassion always, whilst sharing an understanding that we all have a responsibility to ourselves and to others.

Here at the Academy we understand the importance of unconditional positive regard.

We accept and support students exactly as they are. We seek to understand behaviour and support our students in learning to manage themselves and their behaviours in a positive and socially acceptable manner.

Children who are born or become Deaf have additional challenges in life that require extra support. We know that 97% of Deaf children are born to hearing parents and often this can result in our young

people not learning a language in the crucial first years of their lives. A delay in language acquisition can impact not only communication, but also cognitive skills.

Young people who have been placed at The Deaf Academy can be far from home and may have had experience of violence, aggression or challenging situations from family, peers or strangers in the community. They can feel insecure, anxious, upset, frustrated, excluded or they may have no understanding of their own feelings and emotions and how to manage them. This can lead to them feel frustration, anger and anxiety towards others.

Young people can also suffer from mental health challenges including post-traumatic stress disorder, learning disabilities, attachment disorder, neurological damage or many other forms of challenging personal circumstances. This can mean they are not able to manage with everyday decisions and choices, possibly resulting in students showing signs of being emotionally dysregulated.

Some pupils, because of emotional, social or additional special educational needs, exhibit behaviour that is outside the norm for our general student population. Where this is significant, additional or different approaches may be necessary to enable individual pupils to integrate behaviourally and socially to enable individual pupils to successfully interact with their peers, and to make optimum use of the learning and recreation opportunities offered with the minimum disruption to others. Where pupils have additional social/emotional needs, then such pupils have specific short-term behaviour targets. These targets are reviewed and coordinated by the staff team. Some pupils with additional social/emotional needs may be outside the usual behaviour management policy where these are not felt to be conducive to eliminating unwanted behaviour.

Due to the wide spectrum of learners at The Academy, we have adopted an integrated approach to behaviour management.

**Our core two aims being:**

1. **Aspiration** - Ensuring that we set high standards of behaviour for our learners to enable them to maximise their potential.
2. **Inclusion** - Recognising the diversity of learners' additional needs, backgrounds and aspirations within our student body and the need to ensure that we are inclusive in our approach.

To this end we had adopted a dual pathway which includes both a disciplinary and restorative approach to enable flexibility to meet learner needs.

Further details on our behaviour policy can be found on our website.

**PARTNERSHIPS**

The Academy works in close collaboration with other educational providers to offer the greatest social and educational opportunities for students. KS4 and college students are able to study GCSEs and a range of vocational courses at local partner schools, colleges and training providers supported by our Teaching Assistants/Communication Support Workers. Courses include outdoor 7 education, construction, motor vehicle, agriculture and hairdressing with partner schools and colleges.

Sometimes the hearing students base their vocational studies here at the Academy learning alongside our deaf students, for example in our Hairdressing salon. This 'reverse inclusion' opportunity helps

build the self-confidence of our deaf students who are integrating with hearing young people but in a known environment, it also develops deaf awareness amongst the hearing students.

Learning opportunities are also offered to deaf students in mainstream education to come and join our deaf students at the Academy for specialist curriculum activities (e.g. drama and music workshops, signed theatre productions).

### **SERVICES**

In addition to the core teaching and care staff, we also have the following specialist provision:

- Specialist Assessment, Advice and Outreach Provision
- Communication Support Workers providing support to deaf students in other provisions
- Educational Audiology
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Qualified Counsellor
- Nurse

The Academy is able to provide specialist assessment, advice and outreach to support individual students to access education in their local area within mainstream provision, and bespoke packages of specialist education provision for those children and young people who would otherwise be unable to access education.

### **PARENTAL LINKS**

Parents are encouraged to maintain regular links with their child's tutor and residential care key worker. Contact can be made with staff either by telephone or email. Contact can also be made via video calling, e.g. Skype, Facetime. Staff will discuss with parents their preferred means of communication; this may involve Home Books for younger students.

Education staff are available throughout the school day with Residential Care staff being available for telephone calls between the hours of 4pm and 9.30pm.

We also provide regular Open Days and Parent Forum's for parents to visit and meet us face to face.

### **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING**

Students are encouraged to participate in decision making and to understand their rights and responsibilities in maintaining a safe and vibrant learning community. Both school and college have their own Student Councils which have elected members. Residential students can meet regularly with the Head of Care and Deputy Managers in resident flat meetings where concerns and issues can be voiced.

### **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

The Academy caters for deaf students with a broad spectrum of hearing loss. We have a positive view of all deaf students and admit students with additional needs provided that their needs can be met through a differentiated curriculum. We may be unable to accept some students with severe or complex additional needs whose inclusion in class groups would be incompatible with the efficient education of other students, and where there are no reasonable adjustments that we, as an Academy, could take to prevent this incompatibility.

Students across the age range 4-25 years are admitted to the Academy if they fulfil the above criteria, a funding source has been identified (usually the Local Authority) and there is an available place. Students primarily come from the South West and Wales, although we do take students from other parts of the UK.

It is the Academy's policy to treat all people equally irrespective of race, ethnicity, sex, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, religion, disability or age. The Academy Admissions Policy is available on our website.

### **FEES**

Most of our students have their places funded by local authorities and the Education Skills Funding Authority (ESFA), although some maybe privately funded. Separate fees are set for the educational and residential elements of the Academy's provision. Actual fees charged are dependent on the support needs of individual students. Additional fees are also charged to reflect the charges made by external providers where a student is accessing external provisions.

### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

We aim to provide a positive, respectful and safe environment in which students will be encouraged to achieve their potential. However, we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and students, parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the Academy.

We strongly believe that there will be good communication between parents/carers and key staff who will work with their child, such as class teachers and care staff (if the child is in residence) and so minor concerns can be sorted out informally and quickly.

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The Academy Complaints Procedure is available on our website.