

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, 50 Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4NF
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education is a non-maintained special school for moderately, severely and profoundly deaf children.

The residential provision is located within the school grounds. There are plans to relocate the school and the boarding provision to new purpose-built facilities during Spring 2020.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 June 2019

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 15 January 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from their residential experience and are making good progress. They have a variety of positive experiences, which enhance the quality of their school life. Children enjoy flexible boarding arrangements, with some staying for just two nights each week, while others stay throughout most of the school term. Parents comment positively about their child's residential experience. They feel that it helps to improve their child's communication, confidence, social and independence skills.

Relationships between children and residential staff are excellent. Children feel that they can talk to staff and enjoy taking part in activities together. Children have opportunities to enjoy activities that they might not otherwise experience, such as sailing holidays.

Children receive consistently good day-to-day care. There is a strong focus on helping children to communicate effectively. Children say that they benefit from having some staff who are also deaf as this inspires them and gives them confidence about their own future. Staff act as good role models and were observed to be responding to children in a caring and nurturing way.

Placement plans are of a very good standard. They demonstrate close working links with the education team and evidence the progress that children are making. Children's health needs are well met. Medication is safely stored and administered. If errors occur, these are thoroughly addressed to improve procedures and to ensure that the likelihood of further errors is reduced.

Children are treated with respect and dignity and they are supported to treat each other well. They are also helped to develop independence skills that will support them as they become young adults.

Following the last inspection in January, further work has taken place to ensure that children's views are taken into consideration and help to inform improvements, for example children's accounts are central to investigative processes. There are also plans in place to establish a boarding council.

Improvements have been made in the assessment and admission of new children to the school and residential provision. Leaders and managers are mindful of the increase in complexity of children being referred to the school. They are making careful and considered decisions about the children they admit.

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

There has been a significant positive change in the culture of the school in the past 12 months. Children's well-being and safety are very much at the heart of practice. There are effective working links and good communication between the school and

residential provision. This ensures that children's safety and well-being are promoted appropriately.

The school's safeguarding team is made up of complementary senior members of staff, all of whom are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities. The team meets weekly to discuss and review any concerns. Staff are clear about what to do if they have any concerns and feel confident in the senior leadership team to respond to their concerns effectively. Records are thorough and provide a clear evidence trail of action taken. Children told the inspectors that they feel safe and know who to talk to if they have any worries.

Behaviour is good, and children are helped to improve their behaviour. The use of physical restraint has continued to reduce, and when it is used it is a low-level intervention, such as a guide. While records are satisfactory, they do not consistently give a detailed description of the type of restraint used. The inspectors also found an example of a restraint being used that was not recorded as a restraint but as a safeguarding concern. This was acknowledged during the inspection and rectified.

Mostly, children's risk assessments are thorough. However, the inspectors found some shortfalls in respect of the assessment of a child soon to be admitted to the school. This was addressed during the period of the inspection.

Health and safety at the school is robustly managed. Fire safety is good, and technology is used effectively to ensure that children can respond safely.

Recruitment of new staff follows safer recruitment practices for all staff, including bank, agency and voluntary staff. Inspectors recommended that leaders and managers consider ways to improve the quality of detail recorded during interviews of new staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The school has been on a significant journey since the appointment of a new leadership team 18 months ago. It is evident that this journey continues with practices being embedded and further improvements being introduced. The staff and children have confidence in the leadership team and feel included in the progress being made.

The residential team members are passionate, highly motivated and child-focused and there is a tangible sense of everyone wanting to be the best that they can be to benefit the children in their care. Parents told the inspectors about 'the fabulous relationship' that their child has with their key workers and other staff too.

Staff are provided with regular training and opportunities to achieve a professional qualification. Since the last inspection, further work has been done to improve the quality of supervision that staff have. Annual appraisals and regular team meetings are in place and staff commented positively about the ongoing support that they

receive.

Some parents feel that communication from the school is not consistently good. For example, parents say that they do not always know if senior staff are away from the school and who they should contact in their absence. Another comment was that the school's website is difficult to navigate, making it hard for parents to easily access important information.

Effective quality monitoring processes are in place and contribute to the improvements being made.

Shortfalls raised at the last inspection have been addressed and all national minimum standards are met.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that all physical restraints are recorded and followed up appropriately and that records are detailed enough to provide a comprehensive account of the type of restraint used.
- Ensure that suitable training is provided to staff to meet the needs of new children and that safeguarding risk assessments are detailed and fully address all known risks.
- Consider ways to improve the quality of detail recorded during interviews for new staff.
- Consider ways to improve communication to parents and the quality of the school's website.

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: SC022216

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mrs Trudy Chappell and Mr Sylvan Dewing

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01392 267 023

Email address: TChappell@exeterdeafacademy.ac.uk

Inspector(s)

Norma Welsby, social care inspector (lead)

Wendy Anderson, social care inspector



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