

Name of School:	Deaf Academy
Headteacher/Principal:	Principal, Sylvan Dewing Head of School, Rachel Stevens Head of College, David Kussel
Hub:	London AP Special
School phase:	Non-maintained residential special school
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	29/11/2023
Overall Estimate at last A Review	Working towards effective
Date of last QA Review	07/12/2022
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	23/02/2023



Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers, agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

Leadership at all levels Effective

Quality of provision and outcomes Effective

AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs

Area of excellence An applied integrated approach for Deaf young people with additional and complex needs
Accredited

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence N/A

Overall peer evaluation estimate Effective

The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.

1. Context and character of the school

The Deaf Academy is a non-maintained residential special school. It has four types of provision, including a school for students aged 9 to 16, and a college for 16 to 18 and 19 to 25 year olds. About half of students are residential. There is also a children's home for two students. The school is run by a charitable trust, with a board of trustees and a governing body.

There are 66 students on roll and 170 staff. All students are Deaf or have an auditory processing disorder. They also have other special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND). Almost half have social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH). Almost half have a multi-sensory impairment and a quarter have autism. The school moved to a purpose-built campus in September 2020.

There is a principal over all the provisions and the heads of college and school started within the last year. Some of the staff are Deaf. The school is a dual language environment using spoken English and British Sign Language (BSL). Many students also use augmentative alternative communication devices (AAC). Support staff are called leaders of learning (LL).

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The principal and the leadership team are ambitious to develop the academy's unique specialism further and support development in other provisions for Deaf students with SEND. They work together well as a team to continually evaluate the provision and improve it, for example, working with the National Association of Specialist Post 16 Educational providers (NATSPEC). They are developing a specialist teacher of the Deaf and SEND qualification with Exeter University.
- Leaders and staff have developed curriculum pathways to match the abilities and likely destinations of the pupils. Each pupil has a bespoke curriculum within these. The consultation with staff and students has ensured that the knowledge and skills that students need to become independent, employed successful adults is fully embedded, whatever their SEND need.
- The large therapies team, including speech and language therapists, mental health practitioner and audiology expertise, support the holistic provision for students. They have strong links with the National Deaf Child and Adolescent mental health services. They work closely with education staff to ensure that

provision for individual therapy targets are in place in classrooms and being achieved by students.

- Deaf staff significantly contribute to training for their hearing colleagues. They provide excellent role models for students and ensure that procedures for interpretation adhere to best practice. They provide training for deaf awareness for external professionals and organisations that has led to changes in practice, for example, QR codes in a local country park have links to BSL explanations.
- The academy has strong relationships with two local further education colleges. Communication support workers accompany students on courses at these, for example, providing pre and post teaching and supporting the relationship and communication with tutors. Students are studying a wide range of courses including catering and animal care.
- Middle leaders are fully involved in developing staff skills. Any gaps in staff knowledge were identified in a recent audit and necessary training implemented, including for BSL, using AAC and meeting autistic students' sensory needs. This ensures staff have the knowledge and skills to deliver the core provision map.
- Middle leaders work closely with senior leaders to ensure that the wide range of qualifications offered to students is the best for each student, particularly for applied English and mathematics skills. Often students become much more motivated during external college placements. They experience the relevance of the programmes of study for qualifications and communication, and audiology aids to enable them to achieve their ambition, for example, to be a chef.
- School and college students on the student council provide an effective voice for students to implement changes in the academy. They campaign for full recognition of the effects of deafness and how it is often a hidden disability. They are working with the local member of parliament to replace the current wheelchair disability road sign, for example.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if...

- ... leaders continued to develop management information systems for assessment that enable the analysis of progress of the different groups of students.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Excellent relationships are foundational throughout the whole school community. This creates a calm and purposeful place for learning. Staff know students exceptionally well and this enables them to support student self-regulation, for example, with expertise. They know exactly when students need movement breaks and just how much challenge to provide in lessons. Staff used humour well to explain the homophone 'deer' and 'dear' to school students.
- Students in all parts of the academy study the core subjects of English, mathematics and BSL. Deaf staff provide excellently modelled BSL lessons that enable students to communicate and discuss their involvement in sport, for example. Students eagerly recalled their participation in regular sailing activities and developing their skills in badminton. Students achieve sailing qualifications through the Royal Yachting Association.
- Staff and students communicate through a wide variety of media and languages. These are used interchangeably and appropriately in lessons. For example, a student with more complex needs returned to the classroom after time outside, reached for his AAC device and typed, 'outdoors finished.' This unprompted, spontaneous use of the device shows how the student is valuing the ability to communicate. Others rapidly sign speech from adults to their friends if interpretation is not immediately available. College students gain confidence in self-determination, because of the high levels of mutual respect.
- Support staff are highly skilled. They use BSL and communication software effectively, support teaching in mathematics lessons and implementing therapy targets continually through all the interactions they have with students. They are particularly sensitive to students knowing exactly when they need support self-regulation.
- Younger pupils learn to read well. Teachers use the 'visual phonics by hand' method to teach the Deaf students grapheme correspondence. This has accelerated their progress in reading. Older more able pupils are competent readers and learn how to find the meanings of words from dictionaries or on-line.
- Older pupils practise their application of mathematical concepts highly effectively through a well-designed sheet to remind them. Teachers reframe learning in visual and kinaesthetic ways so that students understand.
- Students all have 'iPads' or other electronic devices. Staff support them well to use these both for communication and recording learning. They rapidly access a BSL dictionary and bank of video resources that school staff are

developing to support writing and communication. Older students are accomplished at using phones to support communication when on work experience.

- School and college students have excellent opportunities to apply their skills in placements in the local community. Staff have established strong relationships with many providers, examples include the National Trust and Exeter Chiefs rugby club. When in these situations students see the relevance of audiology and communication aids and their competency and progress using them are accelerated.
- The therapy team works with all staff to write the language and audiology passport, the therapy plan and targets, ensuring this is all linked to the EHCP for each student. Members of the team support LL in the classroom each morning to ensure that all therapy programmes, physiotherapy, physical activity and communication are being integrated into learning throughout the day.
- The Deaf specialist careers advisor is a tenacious advocate for students to ensure that organisations and employers make placements possible for students. This is leading to more opportunities for students and better Deaf awareness in the whole locality.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if...

...teachers further developed the skills and deployment of learning leaders to promote more independence, peer to peer communication and learning for students.

4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - What went well

- All the pupils have additional needs and about third have been out of education for significant periods of time. There are numerous examples of the initial significant impact the school has on Deaf students who arrive in a community where they are accepted, understood and have peers who are like them. Parents report that the positive changes in behaviour and demeanour that they see at home because of this are almost immediate and profound. For example, a student who refused to go to school, screamed and hid under tables, is now packing his bag eagerly each night and looking forward to going to school.

- The school provides a strong Deaf community that supports students to move into the hearing world when they leave. They introduce students to Deaf adult communities wherever they are living. The school employs a Deaf social worker who fully understands the students and the systems that support them in the community and advocates strongly for provision students need.
- Students support each other with communication. They encourage each other, identifying that taking medicine was normal, for example. Deaf staff provide excellent role models for students both for communication and as celebration of deafhood.
- The continuing excellent work in training staff in other organisations and promoting a strong Deaf community in the locality enables students to take active roles when they leave.

4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...

...leaders continued to develop individualised plans to improve long-term outcomes for students with emotionally based school avoidance.

5. Area of Excellence

An applied integrated approach for Deaf young people with additional and complex needs

Accredited

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

The school has been established for many years and although it is one of the 12 specialist Deaf Schools in the country it is the only one for Deaf and SEND. These needs are often complex and include, learning difficulties, ASD, ADHD, charge syndrome, medical needs and SEMH needs. Students are taught in a fully bimodal learning environment.

Staff at the academy use an individualised approach to assessing, supporting, teaching and developing a curriculum for Deaf young people with additional and

complex needs. The curriculum has components of Deaf education, SEND and full communication access.

The Deaf Academy's universal provision ensures that all Deaf/ SEND students have access to the highest quality of teaching and support possible to enable them to make steps of progress towards their individual goals, resulting in them becoming independent Deaf young people in a hearing world. These approaches are continually being developed by the in-house multidisciplinary teams including teachers of Deaf, SEND specialists, speech and language therapists, audiologists, deaf staff, occupational therapists, physio therapists, advisory teachers and subject specialists.

The Deaf Academy frequently welcomes and supports other professionals including mainstream teachers, SEND providers, students, trainee social workers and education support staff working with deaf young people to visit the academy and meet the staff and students. Comprehensive tours are given, opportunities to sit and observe practice and share resources. Other educational providers have visited the Academy to see best practice embedding a total communication approach, adapting, and delivering teaching in a multi-modal manner, the integration of therapies into the curriculum and a learning environment which has been designed and built for Deaf education, and how other environments can be adapted.

The Academy is involved with NASS (National Association of Special schools) and NATSPEC (National Association of Specialist Post 16 Educational providers). Staff have presented at NATSPEC events and hosted regional meetings to share practice. Staff have run training in Deaf awareness and for Deaf with additional and complex needs across the region. The Academy hosted a large group of trainee teachers from Plymouth University last year; they were completing their module on teaching children with SEND.

Services outside of education such as the police, social workers and the NHS have all visited the academy this year to learn more about deaf-friendly environments, the Deaf/SEND curriculum offered, Deaf awareness and how best to support Deaf young people and their families.

Academy staff have seen a real impact in the understanding of professionals in how best to support Deaf with additional and complex needs and how to cater for their needs alongside a real desire to improve accessibility for Deaf people and learn BSL themselves.

5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

There are significant improvement for students in both qualitative and quantitative outcomes including qualifications, destinations or smaller steps with social relationships and their deaf identity. Parents say how life changing coming to the Academy has been for their young person whether that is an improvement in self-esteem and confidence, the ability to communicate, improved school attendance, academic progress, improved social skills or the desire to learn and improve. For families, stress and anxiety levels are significantly reduced for them all. Students' identity as Deaf young people with additional needs grows and develops bringing confidence and self-assurance. Students suddenly come to an environment where they can communicate, be heard, and learn about their Deaf identity, which is literally opening doors to the world.

Feedback school staff receive from visitors or recipients of training they have delivered is very positive. The students are regularly consulted on their views by organisations and work placements to make sure that deaf awareness is considered.

5.3 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?

Rachel Stevens, Head of School, Rstevens@thedeafacademy.ac.uk

Following the QA Review

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, we encourage you to share the main findings with your hub/hub manager so that they can support your hub's activity planning. Challenge Partners will also collate and analyse report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.

For further support following your QA Review, schools can access the School Support Directory; the Challenge Partners online tool that enables schools to connect with other schools in your hub and across the national network of schools.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice (SLP) events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.

Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website. (<https://www.challengepartners.org/>)

Finally, following the QA Review, schools may find it useful to refer to research such as the EEF toolkit to help inform their approach to tackling the EBIs identified in the report

(<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)