

# 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

This residential special school is situated close to the city centre. Children and young people who attend education at this service are deaf. This school and the boarding facility allow for children from across the country to be educated together. This provides them with a specialist shared community.

**Inspection dates:** 11 to 13 December 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor.

**Date of previous inspection:** 7 November 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** inadequate

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is inadequate because:

- Arrangements to ensure that young people are safe are not always effective.
- There is a significant percentage of young people for whom there are concerns of a sexual nature. Leaders and managers have failed to resolve these consistently and effectively.
- Leaders, managers and staff have failed to identify and act upon serious safeguarding concerns.
- Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have failed to take sufficient action to ensure the safety of young people and to improve outcomes for them.
- Arrangements for the safe administration of medication to young people are unsafe and ineffective.
- Leaders and managers have insufficient oversight of the day-to-day arrangements for all children. This includes safeguarding them.
- Leaders and managers do not provide clear strategies to staff to ensure that they address children's concerning behaviour consistently.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- A vice-principal has been recently employed. This appointment has been positive. Staff morale has improved and there is an increased focus on the experiences of children and their outcomes.
- The recent appointment of a skilled and experienced facilities and estates manager has brought a much-needed focus on the health and well-being of young people. Since his appointment, there is clear evidence of improvement. However, some important deficits in the areas of health and safety that have been identified have not yet been addressed.
- The recently appointed designated safeguarding lead has started to improve practice. The sheer size of the task he is faced with means that he is reactive and responsive most of the time. Consequently, serious shortfalls have continued.

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

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 3.1 Children's physical, emotional and social development needs are promoted.
- 3.2 Children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their own health. They are encouraged to participate in a range of positive activities that contribute to their physical and emotional health.
- 3.6 The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell, and ensures that children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Handling of Medicines in Social Care).
- 3.8 All medication is safely and securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the children to whom they are prescribed. Children allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so.
- 3.12 Where necessary, a child has a clear individual health and welfare plan or similar record, containing relevant health and welfare information provided by parents/carers and recording significant health and welfare needs and issues. This record should be agreed by parents/carers and include: records of developmental checks; health monitoring required by staff; intimate care or bodily functions requiring staff help; and the involvement of a child's parents/carers or significant others in health and welfare issues.
- 5.1 Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for children. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and the findings acted upon to reduce risk for all children. Where children are aged eight years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls.
- 6.2 The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured.
- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12.1 The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to

combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions.

- 12.6 A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.6 Staff with management responsibilities have an adequate level of experience or training in the management and practice of boarding to ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.
- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

Some young people do not make the progress they should because the care they receive from staff is sometimes inconsistent or inadequate. Not enough progress has been made by teaching staff to ensure that young people are achieving academically and that they reach their full potential. As a result, young people are not doing as well as they should be in their education.

Not all children are provided with a clean and nurturing environment in which to sleep. Inspectors found one young person's bedroom in an unacceptable state. Hygiene was poor and the room was dirty and smelled. Staff had failed to support the young person to keep it clean. This had been escalated to senior leaders prior to this inspection. Likewise, staff had raised concerns that some young people had beds that were too small for them; no action had been taken to address these concerns.

Not all staff are provided with clear information, guidance and instruction on how to meet and respond to the current needs of the young people. This prevents them from fully understanding specific needs and risks for young people and adds to the inconsistencies in the care that young people receive.

Young people report that they feel their care has improved since the last inspection. They state that they have someone to talk to should they have any worries or concerns. Young people can identify members of staff with whom they enjoy spending time and with whom they have built up good relationships.

Deaf role models who work within this service are seen as positive by the young people. They are respected and young people look up to them. This has supported young people to develop positive aspirations about their futures.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate**

The arrangements to ensure that the young people's welfare is safeguarded and that they are protected from harm are sometimes insufficient. Not all staff demonstrate that they have the skills, knowledge or experience to identify serious concerns for young people and to escalate them to senior managers swiftly. Thresholds applied by staff do not always reflect the seriousness of the concern. Not all concerns are referred to safeguarding agencies in line with policy and procedures. For example, inspectors identified that an unexplained and concerning injury to one young person was not managed appropriately. This left the young person at risk of harm over a number of days and the likelihood of gaining an accurate understanding how the injury had occurred was significantly reduced.

Systems to manage allegations and concerns about staff do not focus sufficiently on the impact on and experiences of young people. At times, serious allegations made

by young people are not prioritised because the focus is on why staff allowed a situation to happen rather than the risk to the young person. Systems prevent staff having all the information that they require. As a result, staff do not always have important information about young people and this prevents them from offering them emotional support and appropriate care.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that all allegations made in respect of staff are thoroughly investigated. For example, inspectors found one allegation of physical harm; no action has been taken to investigate this concern because the allegation was withdrawn. There was a lack of rigour in trying to understand why the allegation was made and what steps could have been taken to ensure that the young person's concern was taken seriously.

Inspectors found concerns about sexualised behaviour for almost half the young people who board at this school. Leaders and managers are taking steps to address weaknesses but effective procedures are not fully in place across all areas of the service to manage these concerns. There is a lack of a consistent approach from staff when they witness or become aware of concerns of this nature. As a result, some of these concerns are minimised and are not escalated appropriately to other agencies.

Arrangements to ensure the safe keeping and administration of medication are inadequate. Medication errors have not been swiftly and robustly addressed by leaders and managers. There are a number of situations where medication is not suitably accounted for. Leaders cannot be sure that this missing medication has been administered to young people. In some cases, medication is not provided to young people in line with their prescriptions. Staff do not always identify the seriousness of this and do not always seek medical advice. The welfare of young people has, at times, been overlooked in these circumstances.

The recently appointed facilities and estates manager is skilled and understands legislation in respect of health and safety well. Since his appointment, there is clear evidence of his impact and value. He is child-focused and passionate about his role and has ensured that young people are consulted and their views considered. One good example of this is in regard to the safety of the site. Some of the young people's recommendations have been implemented and include better walkways, clearer signage and a new fence. As a result, children say that they feel safer and more secure on site.

Staff are more aware of and empowered to challenge intruders. Improved protocols for signing in and out of the site have been introduced and are effective. Additional site security includes the employment of security staff over the weekends. Young people and staff state that they like these new arrangements and they make the site feel more secure.

The arrangements in place for safer recruitment ensure that staff employed at the school are appropriate to work with children. However, there is some missing detail in respect of verifying references by telephone, because the conversation is not

recorded in writing. This means that there is no evidence of the content of the conversation with the referee.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

Management monitoring and oversight have failed to fully identify the weaknesses and shortfalls identified within this inspection. Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that they have effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements for young people. They have failed to ensure that all safeguarding concerns are referred appropriately and swiftly to placing authorities and to the designated officer. Where decisions are made that concerns should be dealt with internally, management investigations are weak.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that staff are provided with clear direction and expectations about their practice. Staff are not provided with all of the safeguarding information that they need to offer children appropriate care and keep them safe. This is in part due to a lack of managerial accountability and oversight when updating children's care planning documents, including risk assessments.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that where meetings with staff raise practice and safeguarding concerns, these concerns are swiftly escalated to the designated safeguarding lead.

Leaders and managers do not always take appropriate steps to manage poor practice. An inconsistent approach has led to occasions where staff with a number of identified shortfalls in their practice continue to supervise, support and manage other staff within the setting.

Leaders and managers fail to ensure that all staff receive regular and meaningful supervision from suitably skilled and experienced leaders. The quality of supervision is too variable. Leaders recognise that additional training is required to improve this area of practice.

Leaders and managers have failed to make sufficient progress to ensure that the arrangements for the safeguarding of children are effective. The culture of safeguarding remains weak. The new designated lead for safeguarding is working hard to review and introduce new systems and procedures to rigorously monitor and evaluate safeguarding but these are not yet rooted in practice. The task before him is of a large scale. A vice-principal has been recently employed. It is evident that this appointment has added value, some positive changes to practice and culture are beginning to emerge and staff morale has improved. However, poor and concerning practice continues and there remains an insufficient focus in practice on the experiences and outcomes for children and their welfare.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** Arnet Donkin

**Type of school:** Non-maintained residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01392 267 023

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## **Inspectors**

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