

2583028

Registered provider: The Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to four children aged between five and 17. According to the statement of purpose, specialist therapeutic care is provided to children who are deaf and have complex needs.

There is no registered manager at the home. The registered manager has resigned, and the deputy manager is currently running the home.

Three children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 10 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/06/2024	Full	Good
21/11/2023	Full	Outstanding
06/09/2022	Full	Good
07/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

There are shortfalls in the effectiveness of leadership in the home and arrangements to keep children safe. This means that children's experiences of the home are mixed. One child has complex support needs. Managers and staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to this child. However, children do not always receive clear and consistent support from staff who they know well.

Three children have continued to live at the home since the previous inspection. All three children were seen and spoken to. The children said that they like living here, and that they get on well with the staff who care for them. They like their bedrooms and can personalise their rooms as they wish. They feel able to talk to staff if they are worried about something. The children said they have a lot of fun, and they do activities that they enjoy. One child has been sea swimming and paddle boarding with staff. Another child has joined a local basketball team.

The home itself is clean, welcoming and furnished in a homely way. The rooms are spacious with comfortable sofas in the lounge and a large dining room where children can enjoy meals with the staff. The garden is well maintained, and there is a trampoline and basketball hoop for children to play with. One child was seen to really enjoy playing tag games with the staff outside. There are lovely photos on the walls of the children having fun and doing activities with staff. One room has been developed into a sensory room with lights and a booth to support a focused conversation for children when they use sign language. There have been some issues identified with the heating and the electrics in the home, which are being investigated.

All children are making progress. They have clear daily routines and expectations in place for them. They are supported to attend health appointments and to develop healthy habits. All three children are attending school full time and are making progress with their learning. The children are also supported by staff to develop their independence skills by learning how to cook or to care for themselves. Staff are respectful to the children and seek their views about their experiences, activities and family time. When children are worried about something that is happening, staff advocate strongly for them. Staff are supporting the children to use their mobile phones and to be safe online.

Some staff have worked with the children for a long time and know them very well. Other staff are new to the home, and as such are still developing relationships with children. Staff mostly know children well and understand how to support their day-to-day care. However, some staff did not know that two children have lawful restrictions in place, and what this means for their care and support. These are outlined in the children's care plans. Leaders and managers have worked closely with

external agencies to understand the specific needs of one child. More staff are now involved in these discussions, improving their knowledge and confidence. Professionals are positive about these working relationships.

Multi-agency meetings are held regularly. Weekly reports are produced for each child, and these are shared with their families and social workers. These plans ensure that there is a team around each child, who are all working together.

Staff support the children to develop their communication skills and to mix with a wide range of people. This supports the children well as they move towards adulthood. However, staff do not always consider and reflect communication needs in the home. Staff do not always use sign language when they communicate. Some staff raised concerns about the lack of awareness about Deaf culture within the wider staff team.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

There have been some serious incidents involving the children. Some of these events have presented a risk to the safety of children and staff. On some occasions, staff take decisive action to keep children safe, but this is not always consistent. Leaders take strong action in response to incidents. However, staff and leaders are not always effective at preventing incidents based on learning from previous concerns. While staff understanding of risks has improved, incidents still occur. This is because staff do not always proactively anticipate or prevent incidents from happening. Not all staff have the skills, knowledge and experience to support children's behaviour. It is acknowledged that there has been a reduction in serious incidents in recent months.

To keep everyone safe professionals recommend that male and female members of staff are both on shift at the same time. Managers acknowledge that it has not always been possible to achieve this. As a result, incidents have occurred, increasing the risk to children and staff. Although managers have put plans in place to keep children safe, staff do not always clearly understand these. This has resulted in occasions when children have been placed at risk of harm. On some occasions, restraint has been used to keep children and others safe.

There have been some concerns raised about staff practice. This included one medication error in which a child was prescribed their medication at the wrong time. This had a negative impact on the child's experiences that day. Although an investigation was commenced, this was not completed, and information was not shared effectively with external agencies. There is an ongoing investigation in relation to concerns about another member of staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Staff have raised concerns about the leadership of the home, and the culture of the working environment. They expressed worries that the children would have noticed the negative atmosphere in the home, and that this impacted on children's emotions and behaviour. The management arrangements in the home have recently changed and staff say the atmosphere and morale have improved. They now feel better supported.

Although some staff have had access to suitable levels of training, there are some gaps identified in this for newer members of staff. Staff have expressed that they are not always able to access the training that is provided, as this is not held at suitable times for them to be able to attend. Leaders have identified some of the shortfalls in the home and have started to take action to address them. This includes giving staff more shared responsibility for different areas of practice. This avoids the responsibility resting solely with one person and enables staff to further develop their skills.

There have been significant staffing challenges in this home. Staff have at times found their job emotionally draining and some have been hurt physically during incidents. Several members of staff have left, and new staff have started working in the home, leading to instability for children. The home is experiencing a more settled period now that staffing appears more stable. New members of staff are being offered more training so they can develop the skills to be able to manage the complex needs of the children.

What does the children’s home need to do to improve? Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children’s Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the ‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, when concerns are raised about members of staff, conduct procedures should be completed and information shared with external organisations.</p>	30 May 2025
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and</p> <p>that each child’s plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c))</p> <p>In particular, staff need to be aware of any legal processes that children are subject to and what this means for their practice.</p>	30 May 2025
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p>	30 June 2025

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—

ensure that staff—

provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background.

(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv)

In particular, ensure that staff develop their knowledge of deaf awareness and have the skill and confidence to support the use of sign language in the home.

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 Care Standards Act 2000 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2583028

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Registered provider address: The Deaf Academy, 1 Douglas Avenue, Exmouth, Devon EX8 2AU

Responsible individual: James Heaver

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sarah Sheffield, Social Care Inspector

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