

Royal School for the Deaf Derby

Royal School for the Deaf, 180 Ashbourne Road, DERBY DE22 3BH

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The Royal School for the Deaf, Derby is a non-maintained residential special school. There are 107 pupils on roll. All pupils have an education, health and care plan for hearing impairment, and some have complex special needs.

The residential service operates on weekdays only, as all children and young people go home at weekends. There are 16 pupils who stay at the school during the week on a full- or part-time basis. The residential accommodation is provided across two residential facilities in purpose-built blocks. The school is a signing and speaking community. The school is situated in the city of Derby.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 5 and 7 November 2024

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers outstanding

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 30 January 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children's experiences of staying in the residential provision of this school are excellent. The staff are dedicated and committed childcare practitioners. The staff nurture children. They are positive adult role models, who teach children a wide range of life skills. As a result of this nurturing approach, children thrive and achieve outstanding outcomes.

The staff are very knowledgeable about each child. They know the exact sign language capability of each child and adapt their own sign language style to ensure that children know what is being communicated to them. This demonstrates the skills of the staff and how adaptable they are in meeting the children's communication needs.

A notable strength in this home is the collaborative work with external professional agencies. This ensures that information is readily exchanged between all the professionals involved with the children to ensure that children's needs are met. External professionals commented that they have observed that the leaders, managers and staff consistently go above and beyond for the children, creating an environment where the children feel cared for and valued.

Children make exceptional progress in education from their starting points when moving to the home. This includes children who have struggled in previous schools. This is a result of effective transition planning, where families are provided with a bespoke and well-organised process that is focused on the needs of the child. Robust but adaptable transition plans are produced to help children to settle into the life of the home and quickly start making progress in the home and in education.

The parents of children accessing the provision are overwhelming positive about the support that their children receive. One parent said, 'They have enabled [name of child] to have so many opportunities and achieve their aspirations.' Parents also describe communication as a strength and say that they are kept up to date about what their child is doing while away from home, as many children are educated a significant distance from home.

Children are encouraged and supported to take part in activities that provide them with new experiences. For example, they go to the theatre, a climbing centre, roller skating, have shopping trips and attend local clubs. In addition, children have had opportunities to present the weather on the news, been to a book launch and also had their artwork displayed at a local art gallery, alongside the work of a deaf photographer.

Staff are truly aspirational for the children. A number of the staff are deaf and are aware of the barriers that exist in society for individuals who are deaf. Staff work

hard with children to equip them with skills to overcome these challenges and to provide children with a wide range of experiences that help with social development and increase children's resilience. A member of staff stated, 'I love supporting the children to have new experiences and to achieve what they didn't realise was possible.'

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

The residential provision and school share several staff who are trained and experienced as designated safeguarding leads. This provides 24-hour safeguarding support. The team understands the needs of the children and their families. The staff work in partnership with agencies and have effective links with local authority designated officers. This collaboration enables the sharing of best practice to keep children safe.

Developing children's independence and taking age-appropriate risks is a real strength of the service. For example, older children go out and meet friends. Before they go out, they sign a log to provide details of where they are going, who they are meeting and what time they are going to be back. The staff can have oversight of this and can take action if the children do not return when specified. This process has reinforced the trust that staff have in the children, alongside the children developing skills relating to staying safe when out and about.

Safeguarding is a key priority for the residential staff team. Safeguarding training is undertaken on a regular basis, and staff are aware of what processes they need to follow should a safeguarding issue arise. The children know who they can speak to if they have a worry or concern.

There is a clear and proactive multi-agency approach to keeping children safe. Children are provided with consistent and reliable daily routines and structure. Staff provide emotional warmth and understanding. This supports children to feel protected and secure. Children say that they feel safe and happy living at the home. One child, who previously had multiple placement breakdowns, said, 'This is the best home that I have ever lived in.'

Managers respond to any allegations against staff, in accordance with guidance. Records of investigations show a thorough approach to managing concerns. When allegations have been made, managers work with safeguarding partners to ensure that all allegations are shared, and investigations take place. Staff are also supported throughout this process. This process ensures that children are protected.

The residential environment remains safe for the children and staff. The necessary health and safety checks are undertaken on a regular basis. There are some additional safety features built into the environment due to the specific needs of the children and staff. The location risk assessment is detailed and shows an awareness of any potential risks and how these are to be managed.

Staff are very proactive and use their skills and experience to creatively respond to risks and de-escalate incidents quickly. Staff have a good understanding of children's emotional needs. As a result, the use of physical restraint has not been required for a number of years.

All the children are polite and respectful, and their interactions with all staff were positive. Staff are approachable and children seek reassurance from them when needed. This means that there is a culture of inclusiveness that crosses the whole of the school and residential provision. Because of this, children feel safer.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The residential team is well established and highly effective. The lead for residence provides staff with steadfast leadership. The team is aspirational for all children. There is excellent team morale and a sense of shared ownership. This ensures continued and dynamic improvement across the residential provision.

The leadership team has continued to work hard in order to strengthen the relationships within the local community. This helps to raise the awareness of deaf people in the local area and forge important links with resources that can benefit the children and the whole community.

Leaders and managers have well-established working relationships with a wide range of professionals and external partner agencies. They continue to develop new networks to share and improve practice. For example, connections have been made with the police link officer for the deaf, and other external professional agencies. The residential team provides the best possible care and outcomes for children.

The excellent work of the leadership team has led to children's lives being changed for the better. The school provide training and development to partner agencies. For example, a firefighter was able to use sign language in an emergency, providing support and reassurance to an individual involved in a road traffic accident. The firefighter was commended for their actions. A child from the residential provision was able to award the firefighter with their British Sign Language training certificate. This was an amazing opportunity for the child to experience the thrill of meeting the firefighters and being recorded for national television. Many other examples of working closely with the local community and provide the children with links to different life experiences.

Leaders and managers have an in-depth understanding of the holistic needs of the children. They have a definite commitment to making sure that each child reaches their individual potential. Leaders and managers provide clear evidence of the progress and plans for each pupil.

Staff receive regular and focused supervision. In addition, team meetings are held each week, so all staff are aware of any issues relating to the children and residential

provision. Staff retention is high, and staff remain in their roles for a number of years. This provides consistency for the children and continually builds on staff's knowledge and experience. A member of staff commented, 'I feel very supported and I love my job and really enjoy it.'

The governors remain committed to supporting and developing the residential provision. They provide an added level of scrutiny, with a focus on improving outcomes for children alongside them being safeguarded. They act as a critical friend to the leadership team and are a force for continued improvement.

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: SC002015

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Paul Burrows

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

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