

SC489640

Registered provider: Exeter Royal Academy For Deaf Education

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a charity that specialises in the education and care of children and young people who are deaf. The home was registered in July 2015. It provides care and accommodation for up to three children and young people. In addition to a sensory impairment, the children and young people may also have a learning disability and/or emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home is located adjacent to the school and college. The present group of young people are all enrolled in the school or college, but the home may potentially accommodate those who are educated elsewhere.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 December 2017

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 children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The home has improved steadily since the last full inspection on 5 January 2017. Both the requirements and recommendations made at that inspection are met. The home is beautifully decorated for Christmas and feels warm and homely.
- All three young people have made very good progress since their arrival in the home. Placing social workers and their managers are very pleased with the service, which has made a real difference to the young people's lives. They say that there is excellent communication between the staff and the placing authorities.
- The young people are very well supported with personal difficulties. The registered manager and staff demonstrate a total commitment to anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice.
- The home is very well led and managed. The registered manager is very well supported by the senior leadership team.
- The registered manager keeps the young people safe through careful evaluation of risk. This is balanced with a pragmatic, common-sense approach.
- The home employs both deaf and hearing staff, all of whom are skilled in British Sign Language. The staff always sign, even when speaking to hearing colleagues, so that the young people can follow the conversation and do not feel left out.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The young people say that they have been waiting a long time for the bathroom to be refurbished. The present bathroom is not maintained to the same high standard as the rest of the house. It is outdated and shows signs of condensation damage.
- The human resources department carries out checks on all prospective employees. This includes verifying references by telephone, but the conversation is not recorded. This means that there is no evidence of the content of the conversation with the referee.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 05/01/2017 | Full | Good |
| 08/11/2016 | Full | Inadequate |
| 07/01/2016 | Full | Good |

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children. They will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
In particular, the registered person should modernise and upgrade the children's bathroom facilities
- Ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
In particular, the registered person should ensure that there is a written record of telephone conversations made in order to verify references.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The quality of care in this home is very good. The staff speak warmly about the young people and are concerned for their welfare. They love their work and are highly motivated.

The young people say that the staff are 'really supportive... They will make phone calls for you, they help you.' The young people have no concerns about their care and say that they could talk to the staff about any worries, if they chose to do so.

The three young people have all made very good progress since they arrived. Two have been there for just over a year and are very settled. The most recently admitted young person is also settled and likes the home. In spite of her recent arrival, this young person has made very good progress in her chosen coursework at school.

The staff have taught the young people about the importance of inclusion and challenging discrimination. For example, they have been very supportive of a young person who is exploring their identity. The registered manager and staff have helped this young person to join a local support group, which has been very helpful. They have also worked exceptionally well with the other young people in the home. As a result, the young people now have a much better understanding of the challenges that their friend

faces as a deaf young person who is also a member of another minority group.

The young people say that they are fully involved in the home. They are given choices about the foods they eat. Every week, each young person chooses and cooks a meal for the household. This helps to create a 'family' atmosphere as well as developing skills which will be needed as the young people approach adulthood.

The young people can also choose what they would like to do outside school time. The young people have been on holiday with the staff and have had special birthday outings to concerts and to see their favourite football team play. The young people also enjoy trips to the stables and cinema, and going swimming. One young person goes to Explorer Scouts every week and is taking a course in youth leadership. The young people are enthusiastic about their activities and value their time in the community. The staff help them to access clubs and events in the community to help them with communication.

The registered manager meets with the young people every month. He makes sure that they have the opportunity to talk about the home and any concerns they may have. Every young person has a key worker, a named member of staff who takes a special interest in their care and welfare. The young people say that their key workers are helpful and supportive.

One young person was struggling to accept that they are deaf before they came to the home. They were also finding it difficult to engage with education and family relationships. The home and the school together have helped this young person to understand and acknowledge their disability. They now have a tailor-made package of education, which has helped to engage them in learning. The young person has also gained the confidence to attend deaf clubs in the home's locality as well as in their family's home area. This shows that they can apply the social skills they have learned in the home and school, in a wider context.

The home has well-recorded healthcare plans, which detail specific needs. These records note any allergies or sensitivities, so that the staff are aware of any difficulties that the young people have with certain foods.

Medication is generally well recorded. One very small recording error was identified and amended during the inspection. Medicines are kept and administered safely.

The young people receive very good emotional support. Some young people who have specific emotional needs have been referred to the child and adolescent mental health team and other resources.

The registered manager has advocated particularly well for one young person. He identified that this young person's communication needs would not be met by the school that was planned for her.

This young person would benefit from an independent advocate to support her. The registered manager had already identified the need for this and is actively seeking a

suitable person to undertake this role.

The young people receive as much help as possible to move into or out of the home. Since the last inspection, one young person has moved in. It was not possible for them to visit in advance, but the registered manager went to meet her and gave her a young person's guide. This is a very helpful, child-friendly leaflet which describes the home well. The registered manager also carried out a detailed risk assessment before this young person was admitted to the home. This reduced the risk of incompatibility with the other young people living there.

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

The registered manager has developed good quality, detailed risk assessments for each young person. These include past and present risks. They are regularly updated to provide the staff with the latest information about the individual young people. Behaviour management plans are equally detailed and provide a clear guide for the staff. This makes sure that the staff support the young people in the most sensitive ways.

The home has been through a difficult period over the past year. At its first full inspection last year, there were major shortfalls in safeguarding. Since then, the registered manager has worked extremely hard to establish clear policies and procedures and to obtain further training and mentoring. As a result, he is now extremely vigilant and much more aware of safeguarding matters. It is very positive that he does not overreact. When an incident occurs, it is managed decisively but thoughtfully, placing the needs of children and young people at the centre of the process.

The home continues to make steady improvements in keeping the young people safe. There have been no episodes of young people going missing. When one young person ran off around the school grounds, the manager made sure that the staff followed the correct procedures to encourage him back. He explored the incident in depth and has taken appropriate measures to prevent this from happening again.

There have only been three restraints since the last inspection. All required minimal intervention and were brief in duration.

The young people have had a number of incidents, but the staff handled these well. Any consequences given have been fair and relevant to the incident.

The home has a meaningful reward system. Rewards range from having a television in the bedroom, a boutique photo shoot, a manicure and an off-road driving experience. These provide good incentives to help the young people to behave well.

The first recommendation made during this inspection concerns the staff recruitment files. These are generally well managed and contain all the information required by the regulation to keep young people safe. References are always verified by phone, but the detail of the conversation with the referee is not recorded.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is very experienced. He was previously a deputy manager and has been employed by the company for eight years. He holds a degree in health and social care management. He has enhanced this qualification with training in safer recruitment and safeguarding at level 5.

There is good management oversight of the home. The registered manager has a skilled deputy manager, who carries out the monthly checks of the home. The registered manager works through these checks during supervision. He is ambitious for the home and this is shown in the considerable progress made over the last year.

There is now evidence for some exceptional outcomes for some young people. The service has more confidence and a deeper understanding of the very high level of monitoring that is required to ensure that safeguarding is of a high standard.

The home has a clear development plan. The registered manager and deputy manager have a good working relationship and have lots of ideas. These are tempered with an understanding that changes cannot be made overnight. They acknowledge that there was a need to change both culture and behaviour. This has been successful.

The deputy manager was new to this role in October 2016. Since her arrival, the registered manager has seen a dramatic change in staff and young people. There are good working relationships between members of the management team and the school leadership. The registered manager is proud that he can now say that the young people are 'loved and cared for'.

The home has a full staff team. Agency staff are used rarely. Staff are well inducted and their foundation training is good. Further training is available to them as required. The deputy manager has recently been to a conference and used the event to establish some useful links with other providers to help the home access resources for the young people for the future.

All staff receive regular monthly individual supervision. This is well recorded. They also receive shift supervision, which involves direct observation of their practice. As a result, the staff feel well supported in what can be a difficult role.

The registered manager has a very clear understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. He writes very detailed and honest regulation 45 reports. These show the home's progress. They also contain the young people and staff's comments about how further improvement could be made. This makes them aspirational and useful working documents.

The two requirements and both recommendations from the last inspection are met in full. The quality of care, responses to the young people and recording have all improved considerably since the last inspection. No young people have gone missing, so no return home interviews have been needed. Consequences, as described above, are now much

more creative and relevant to the young people.

The home has a good statement of purpose. This provides an accurate description of the home's work with young people. The excellent children's guide contains links to videos showing a person signing, so that deaf young people who do not read can understand it.

The second recommendation made as a result of this inspection concerns the young people's bathroom. This is outdated and does not represent the high standard of the rest of the house. The registered manager had already identified this as an area for improvement. He has a budget to do some of the work, but the money available does not cover the full project. The young people commented that it was taking 'a very long time'.

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 children's home 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 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: SC489640

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Registered provider address: 50 Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 4NF

Responsible individual: Karen Burgess

Registered manager: James Heaver

Inspectors

Heather Chaplin, social care inspector

Michelle Oxley, social care inspector

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