

Royal School for the Deaf Derby UK

Team for visit:

Val Quinn	Principal of St. Joseph's
Regina O'Connell	Principal of St. Mary's
Lilian Molloy	CIDP Board Member
Liam O'Dwyer	CIDP CEO
Shirley Higgins	Interpreter / Teacher
Elizabeth McLafferty	Interpreter / Teacher

Dates of visits:

4th and 5th of March 2009

Contacts at facility:

Cheryl Ford Principal

Description of services provided at the facility:

School for Deaf children from 3 to 18 years
Audiology services including daily hearing aid checks
Outreach services to the Deaf children in mainstream
Sports facilities
Residential accommodation
DVD making facility
Weekend language support for parents and teachers
The school caters for 130 pupils both day and residential
Important role for parents in the support of the school and their children
Critical day long assessment of every child that is accepted into the school
Co educational school

Description of the facility itself:

The original school for the Deaf in Derby was knocked down and a new school built in the 1970's. The facility is now aged but is well spread out on a site of circa 10 acres with single storey buildings and a football pitch. The school is laid out as separate junior, senior and older children facility. The residential accommodation is in separate ordinary houses on the edge of the site.

Exterior:

Mainly brick and pre fabricated buildings with some new buildings especially a stand alone wooden structured science laboratory. The exterior is laid out in a number of courtyards with good meeting and sitting places.

Interior:

Attractive interior with bright colours, plenty of light and information on the school and school activities and trips on all the walls which is kept up to date. The building is designed to meet the needs of signing. An excellent space for a reception waiting area has been designed, and good renovation of older buildings using modern materials

Environment:

Built in a suburb of Derby it is well sheltered with large trees and mature gardens with an attractive water feature at the entrance to the buildings, the space is becoming crowded as the school expands.

Lessons for Village Project:

Use of sign throughout campus. Everybody must have level 2 within two years. Residences kept homely by being based in large private houses adjacent to the site. Use of premises at the weekend for training of teachers and parents. Outreach facility from school to children in mainstream. Support of their own graduates in moving to college or further education or training.

Positives for inclusion:

Open and attractive reception area with seating and coffee available. Simple things like a photo record of all the news happening in the school. Good use of mezzanine floors to divide large older rooms. Own audiology, ear mould and DVD business. Standards set for signing on site (40% of staff are Deaf). Child focused not philosophy based. Many social activities for the students e.g. valentines ball

Negatives to be avoided:

The only negatives were that some of the buildings had become very dated and that pre fabs had been placed inappropriately on certain areas of the site to create more space.

Summary:

This was a useful visit in terms of both the policy on signing the focus on the needs of the children not any ideology in relation to signing or oralism and employment of Deaf people as well as good design in respect of their campus. While much of what CIDP does is identical in our schools this was a good example of how a signing environment works. The Royal School is a private school and its teachers and support resources are more extensive than ours. It is a very good example of the type of outreach we hope to have in the future. Very good visit, very helpful Principal who shared her ideas and experiences. Good management structure with each area having its own head. The Principal teacher is in charge of both the school and residence. A levels are not taken at the school and Deaf people with other disabilities do not feature much.

Other Comments from the group:

Environment:

Cheerful with lots of communication going on. Very upbeat Principal!

The post 16 department is very student friendly with kitchen / dining area and study stations on a mezzanine level.

Typical school building with nice gardens

Tidy and quiet area

There are ramp entrances to all buildings for wheelchair users.

Good relationship between students, staff and teachers as most of them are fluent in sign language.

Lessons for Village Project:

Current buildings can be easily modified and cater for specialist subjects such as Science, Home Economics, IT, Art and Woodwork. New buildings are not priority.

Well lit area.

Single storey building

Qualified teachers with excellent sign language skills

Everyone using sign or speaking slowly when there are deaf adults or children present.

Positives for inclusion:

Their audiology service

Reception area

Uniform for seniors was smart and more adult

Audiology and speech and language department.

Proper and positive school promotion.

Health Centre

High percentage of deaf staff with appropriate skills employed at school.

Information made available for staff and parents in Sign Language and English.

Teachers using sign language in classrooms.

English taught at school.

Deaf pupils in residence encouraged to take part in hearing community activities.

Young people doing vocational courses at local mainstream colleges with support required.

Older children encouraged to cook for themselves.

Good exam results.

Negatives to be avoided:

Having the school and residences under a single director / principal

Deaf children with additional special needs are not accepted at school if they are incapable of accessing the Curriculum.

Parents have a right to withdraw children from beneficial education.

Fewer speech and language therapists

Summary:

It was a very worthwhile trip. To see an alternative funding method - it provides restrictions but also allows the school to 'tailor make' positions as required - not tied into national job descriptions and pay scales.

Cheryll Ford, the principal, spent most of the morning talking to us and answering our questions. It was almost lunchtime by the time we were shown around the classrooms. I felt at home with students and staff as they were easy to communicate with. It was worth a visit.