

# New College Worcester

Inspection report for residential special school

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

New College Worcester (NCW) is a non-maintained special school and exists to provide an appropriate education for young people with a visual impairment, primarily within the 11-19 age range. Students are able to access the National Curriculum and progress to study beyond 16. There is a strong emphasis on supporting the development of independence skills necessary for young people, including mobility, living skills and access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The college provides a boarding environment, but is able to offer educational opportunities to a limited number of local children, dependent on teaching group size. Up to 108 students of both sexes can be accommodated across the site.

### **Summary**

This was an announced inspection that concentrated on the 18 key National Minimum Standards. The inspection focused on health needs, individual support and keeping children and young people safe. The inspection also concentrated on how the school consults with young people. This inspection did not look at the admission or leaving processes for the young people, or how the home prepares young people for adulthood. The inspection did not assess the environmental standards of accommodation. The overall quality rating for this setting is good with outstanding features. Children and young people's care is given a high priority and their educational achievement is strongly promoted. Excellent resources are in place for supporting student's academic studies and the small teaching groups are a particular strong feature of the school. Staff are able to successfully respond to the needs of young people with a visual impairment. There is a strong integrated approach with the wider community and this is particularly evident with the work that takes place in the Outreach programme. The setting has developed effective partnerships with parents, carers and other significant stakeholders.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection, the school was required to improve the way in which the service managed the health care plans at the homes. In particular, it was asked to review the arrangements for opening hours of the school surgery. As a result, care staff were provided with extra training related to medication and this has successfully resolved the previous concerns. This has ensured that staff are well placed to manage medication more effectively. The setting is organising appropriate first aid training for care staff. Students have been provided with opportunities to be involved in reviewing the menu planning for the college and the management show a willingness to resolve the issues around the topic of food. Approaches taken by staff to improve the communication levels and working relationships in the sixth form groups have been particularly successful. Gap students are now more involved in staff meetings to ensure that effective communication is taking place. The recommendations related to the complaints policy, child protection, recruitment processes and management are now met. Similarly, the school now provides a comprehensive range of information about the school's resources.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The school is able to address the health needs of children and young people placed, and are taking positive steps with health promotion. The health and medication policy and procedures are well written and clear. During the student's pre-entry assessment period a detailed health history is obtained from parents and carers. This information is comprehensive and clear about the areas of assessed needs and the particular support required. Staff give careful consideration to the health needs of students related to being visually impaired, blind or partially sighted. The children boarding have access to a school nurse. The school has a well-equipped surgery and sickbay that is of a high standard. Students can access this at any part of the day if they are unwell. A visiting doctor holds a weekly GP surgery. Students are enabled to attend primary health care resources, including dentist and other specialist consultants. The nurse maintains and records all information related to medical interventions. Since the last inspection the nurse has developed a health care plan and this information is located in the nurse's surgery. The use of the health plan provides a useful focus to bring together planning for all aspects of health care. The system of communication between the nurse and residential staff is effective and ensures all significant information is acted upon, promptly. Care staff show diligence with record keeping and communicating any observational changes with health care regimes. All staff receive external accredited training in the administration of medication and this is also monitored by the school nurse. An improved knowledge base has helped the staff to increase their confidence levels and the recording mechanisms used have been enhanced to provide extra safeguards. All medications are securely stored within staff offices and are restricted to authorised staff only. The school nurse carries out a medication audit to monitor medication cupboards, stock levels and medication records. The school nurse is checking staff competency levels but there is no formal record made of these audits. The care staff respond to accidents appropriately and there are clear arrangements for nominated first aiders on-site. First aid boxes are well maintained in all of the boarding accommodation. All accidents are effectively recorded in an accident book and these records are monitored by the Head of Care. Children and young people are well informed about how to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle. The college has changed the smoking policy for students and staff to support them with giving up smoking. Generally, students are satisfied with the choice of food and some work is underway with the menu planning for the tea time meals. A minority of students express concerns about some students eating patterns. Staff have identified this as a problem but no specialist advice or training has been sought for staff to develop strategies to address this area. The Principal has identified shortfalls which will be addressed.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children and young people's safety is protected because the college takes active steps to promote safeguarding practices. Staff are provided with a comprehensive selection of policies and procedures to positively promote protective care practices. Staff are fully aware of what action to take if they have any concerns about a child. Children are protected because staff work towards safeguarding their rights and promoting their welfare. Staff see this as essential in terms of protecting children and young people. The college has designated staff for child protection and clear contact arrangements in place for the Head of Care. The college is able to swiftly report concerns and pass information on to the external, relevant authorities. The college remains committed to regular, updated training for care staff in child protection and staff feel their knowledge on this subject is good. Gap students are provided with child protection training but those Gap students in receipt of the training do not always feel confident about their understanding of the procedures or the potential risks involved in the workplace. Children and

young people are provided with good levels of supervision. Their whereabouts on the college campus are well monitored. All students are expected to inform care staff of when they leave the boarding accommodation and their return and this is a practice that students are familiar with and successfully follow. The college has procedures in place for unauthorised absences from the school. Young people learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they have good opportunities to practise the evacuation procedures and staff keep a record of the practice. All of the fire safety checks, drills and the fire risk assessment are up to date. Many of the students met by the inspector are of the view that the staff respect their privacy and know how to handle confidential information. Staff communicate effectively and work alongside students to develop opportunities for independent living skills and for students to develop skills to manage their hygiene. Children and young people express positive views about how they could make complaints. Information is well published in the school setting and each of the boarding accommodation blocks keep a log of complaints. The vast majority of the records demonstrate clear outcomes but what is less evident is how students are receiving feedback and whether they are satisfied with the course of action and the progress of the investigation. However, the college is in the process of introducing a standardised recording format to help to improve this area. Ofsted has received no complaints about the setting. Children and young people positively engage with staff and the atmosphere is harmonious. The college has a clear policy related to the management of behaviour and staff are appropriately trained in de-escalation behavioural techniques. However, this training method is not mentioned in the behaviour management policy. The staff model and promote positive behaviours. Students are encouraged to reflect on poor behaviour and a clear system is in place to apply sanctions. Currently, the records do not record or provide details of any other staff involved and the effectiveness and consequences of the sanction. Similarly, no record is made of students' views. Most of the students consider that staff respond promptly to incidents where bullying occurs. The availability of the pastoral support team and class tutors are cited as important in alerting staff to incidents of bullying. Students express confidence with care staff support and being good at enabling students to resolve conflicts. The young people are protected by the college's recruitment systems and these records are held at the school and were available during the inspection visit. Checks are completed and the personnel files demonstrate that audits are taking place.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people receive outstanding support to meet their educational needs. The college places a strong emphasis on the academic achievement for each student. Students have excellent resources available to support their educational studies, including a purpose built library and are happy with the computer suite facility. The vast majority of the boarding accommodation provides wireless laptop connections. Students highlighted overall satisfaction with the various computer equipment to aid and assist students with their studies. However, a small coherent group of students indicate that laptops and some of the additional software, for example, the voice activated equipment, frequently breaks down. The care and welfare of students is given a high priority by staff. The college ensures that a good variety of recreational activities are available including climbing, bell ringing, horse riding, swimming, rowing clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The school provides a designated activities team to support students with access to local community resources and events. The school employs two qualified counsellors and an independent listener who is available by phone and visits the school monthly. The college also provides an equality and diversity working group. Overall,

children and young people are succeeding academically and socially and the outcomes are positive.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's welfare and self-esteem is promoted with positive strategies in place to encourage their development. Overall, student's needs are being addressed but the records do not always demonstrate this consistently. Student's progress is monitored through the use of care plans which are tenuously linked to the Independent Living Skills (ILS). However, limited progress has been achieved with reviewing the care plan format and the implementation of an integrated process. Similarly, where there are significant changes, for example, where a reduction in health care is evident, the care plan remains static with no new information being added. Equally, the care plans do not address in full, matters related to young people's identity, for example, culture or religious needs. The care plans do not represent any measurement of objectives, if these are achievable and if the outcomes focussed on, are designed for that individual. The quality of information in the care plans is variable. There is no evidence that senior staff are monitoring the content or evaluating the effectiveness of the care planning process. Likewise, there is no consideration given to how young people are enabled to access and be involved with their care plans. The lack of these actions means that staff are not provided with current and up to date information about the needs of students. Children and young people's review meetings are well planned and clear arrangements are in place to involve them and share their views. The school council is an active forum and considerable effort has been made for council representatives to engage meaningfully with the management of the college. In particular, sixth form groups expressed real satisfaction with the care staff's willingness to address their views and concerns. Overall, students express confidence with the levels of communication that exist with care staff and teachers. Children and young people are able to retain contact with parents and carers. Students have access to phones and often communicate via email. Some students return home for weekend visits during their academic term. The college also provides accommodation for families who wish to visit and stay overnight. Not all of the care plans detailed the contact arrangements for relatives.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Since the last inspection the college has de-merged from RNIB National and is now known as New College Worcester (NCW). The college has a new constitution, business plan and new appointments to the board of directors. The Principal has arranged training for the board members to ensure continuity that is supportive of the leadership and the direction of the work of the college. New College Worcester is effectively managed and this has a positive impact on the care and support that students receive. The Principal has a clear vision for the college and it features strongly in the Statement of Purpose and in the policies and procedures. Senior managers are aware of their individual and collective responsibilities. The college has recently appointed an Assistant Principal and this strengthens the senior management team further. Children and young people are provided with clear and accurate information about how the school runs, the facilities and the staff support available in the boarding provision. The Head

of Care is suitably qualified and skilled and is supported effectively by the Principal. Children and young people are well served by a staff group that show commitment and enthusiasm for their work. The majority of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The staff group are also provided with a planned programme of training to develop staff skills and competencies. Children also benefit because staff manage their time well and are well deployed. The senior staff ensure a sufficient number of staff are available to support children's needs. However, the college does not have effective contingency plans in place if staff are absent at short notice. Although some progress has been made to develop the quality assurance function it is not sufficiently robust to provide an accurate assessment of care practice. The Principal has identified shortfalls which will be addressed. Care staff have made a significant contribution by their involvement with the college self-evaluation process and this is a significant step forward for the college.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- provide records of all medication audit checks. National Minimum Standard 14.17
- provide specialist advice and training on the dietary needs of young adolescences. National Minimum Standard 14.4
- provide students with feedback after a complaint has been logged and check if they are satisfied with the course of action and the progress of the investigation. National Minimum Standard 4.3
- ensure all Gap students are proficiently trained in child protection. National Minimum Standard 5.8
- provide information in the behaviour management policy about the training method used and include details of how refresher training is organised. National Minimum Standard 10.11
- ensure sanctions records provide details of any other staff involved and the effectiveness and consequences of the sanction and reflect the views of the students involved. National Minimum Standard 10.9
- provide a forum where student laptops with additional software that encounter technical problems are addressed more swiftly. National Minimum Standard 12.4
- ensure the care plans address in full, matters related to young people's identity. National Minimum Standard 17.5
- provide placement plans that comply with standard 17.5. National Minimum Standard 17.5



- enable young people to be involved with their care plans. National Minimum Standard 17.7
- provide details in the care plans about the contact arrangements for relatives. National Minimum Standard 20.1
- ensure senior staff are monitoring the content and evaluating the effectiveness of the care planning process. National Minimum Standard 17.1
- provide clear staffing contingency plans if staff are absent at short notice. National Minimum Standard 28.11
- ensure the quality assurance function captures the children's experiences and demonstrate how the service is being measured and improved upon. National Minimum Standard 32.2

## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for residential special school

#### Being healthy

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

**Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

**Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

**Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Making a positive contribution

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

**Annex A**

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

**Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.**

### **Achieving economic well-being**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

**Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.**

### **Organisation**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

**Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**