

West Of England School For Children With Little Or No Sight

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Christina Maddison
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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

The West of England School and College is a non maintained residential special school for children and young people with visual impairment. The majority of children and young people have additional needs. The age range of children and young people is five to 22 years. There are 93 boarders and 41 day students.

A 24 hour nursing service is provided in addition to physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and mobility education. There is a health centre used by nurses, therapists and visiting medical staff.

The residential accommodation and educational facilities are all on one site. Some residential areas have facilities and adaptations to meet the needs of young people with additional physical needs. Residential areas provide sleeping accommodation, dining areas, recreational areas and sufficient bathroom facilities. There are outdoor play areas which include a sensory area, running track and playground.

Summary

This key inspection took place over three days and was undertaken by two Inspectors. Pre-inspection information was supplied by the school, and 15 survey forms were returned by parents and learners. Early morning and evening care routines were observed during the inspection.

Improvement and a desire to improve the care services offered to the children and young people who use the residences at the school is clearly evident. Many improvements have taken place since the previous inspection and the managers and staff are to be congratulated for the hard work that has taken place, always with the wellbeing of the children and young people at the forefront of any changes. All of the children and young people are encouraged to become as independent as possible in all areas of their life, and all efforts are made by the care staff to maximise their abilities and skills. There is good teamwork between the education staff, care staff, therapists and nursing staff that ensures consistency of care for the children and young people.

Improvements are planned for the College residences that will enhance the independence of the young people who are wheelchair users and provide even better accommodation in the residences for them.

There are three recommendations to the school following this inspection in the outcome area of Staying Safe.

The children, young people and parents value the care and services offered at the school and report feeling valued and enabled. One survey form stated the following:

'The support that my child has received at West of England has been outstanding, and the attainments would not have happened for her without the consideration and consistency of the care and learning staff, I will find it very hard when she moves on, as this has been an oasis for us in a very long and traumatic journey as parents with a special child.'

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 previous inspection, the school was asked to ensure that the systems for administering and recording medication met with National Pharmaceutical guidelines, and that health care records were filed systematically. A review of these have been undertaken, and this standard is now met.

The manager was asked to review the effectiveness of child protection training at the service. This has been undertaken, and staff are now clear about their personal responsibility for reporting to safeguarding teams should this be necessary.

The process of recruitment of staff now includes all elements of Standard 27.2.

The files of the young people have been reviewed, and now contain all relevant information in a clear and consistent format that is accessible to the staff.

All new staff now have one to one fortnightly supervision during the first two terms of their employment.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children and young people's health needs are very well met whilst they are staying at the school. They all have a health plan which details very clearly what their sometimes very complex healthcare needs are and how staff will meet these. Qualified nurses are always on duty and offer training and advice to care and education staff regarding medical issues. The health care team has recently undergone a restructure which will lead to even further development and improvement regarding how the health needs of the learners are met. The school has good links to a variety of health care professionals, including the services of a psychologist, occupational therapist, mobility specialist and speech and language therapist. There is a dedicated therapy team working at the school and care sites that offers therapy to the learners as part of the extended curriculum. Learners are able to access the services of a General Practitioner of either gender either in the school or in the community depending on their preference.

There is a very good and robust system in place for the administration of medication. All staff that administer medication have received appropriate training. It was observed that medication is administered by staff in a manner that promotes the young person's privacy and dignity.

Staff are knowledgeable about the dietary needs of the children and young people, and are further helped by the use of prompt cards on the dining room table which list the individual care needs and preferences of the children and young people at meal times. Mealtimes are a relaxed and social occasion where the children and young people are offered appropriate help whilst ensuring that they are as independent as possible. The children and young people said that they liked the meals offered, and are included when the menus are decided. Some young people shop, prepare and cook their own meals as part of their preparation for independent and semi-independent living when they leave the school. Healthy eating is encouraged, and the menus reflect the cultural needs and preferences of the children and young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff respect the privacy and dignity of the children and young people. Bedrooms are lockable and the majority are single rooms. Toilets and bathrooms have appropriate locks fitted, and staff provide personal and intimate care with dignity and awareness of gender issues and the personal preferences of the children and young people. The swimming pool changing areas do not currently provide adequate privacy to the children and young people when they are changing.

There is a robust complaints policy in place, and the parents, young people and children felt able to use this and were aware of whom they could complain to. A record of complaints is kept and evidence that complaints are dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner.

There is a good focus on safeguarding. There is a policy and procedure, that staff are aware of and felt able to use. Staff have received comprehensive training and there are good links with the Devon local safeguarding board. All staff have current Criminal Records Bureau checks in place.

The children and young people feel that they are protected from any bullying, and recently an anti-bullying week was held to raise awareness around bullying issues. Equality and diversity issues are discussed at the school council to raise awareness amongst the children and young people. Staff are aware of the procedures should a child or young person abscond or be found to be missing to ensure the safety as far as possible of the children and young people.

Positive behaviour is encouraged at the school, and there is a high level of understanding about the reasons for any challenging behaviour, which are then addressed with the help of the on site psychologist. Sanctions that are recorded are appropriate, and the children and young people felt that they are fair. Physical intervention by staff is rare. These are recorded with the exception of the consistent recording of the duration of any physical intervention.

Procedures and fire prevention equipment are in place to ensure the children and young people's safety in the event of a fire. Staff undertake fire safety training. A record of staff who have attended the fire evacuation practices is not currently kept. Children, young people and staff were clear about what their actions should be in the event of a fire.

The school has a good programme in place for the management of health and safety, and a robust risk assessment system. They provide a good level of guidance for staff so that any risks to the children and young people when they are in the school or out on activities are minimised.

Staff who are recruited are suitably checked prior to starting work at the school to ensure the safety of the children and young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All the children and young people benefit greatly from the support and guidance they receive whilst at the school. They are encouraged to maximise their potential and independence both academically and socially. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs of children and young people who have visual impairments and sometimes additional complex care needs. There is an extended school curriculum, with very good communication between the staff at

the school and residence. Aims and targets interweave to ensure consistency of care. Parents are very much seen as partners, and are fully involved. Virtual forums are in place for parents who live a long distance away from the school so that they can be included.

One of the recent positive developments at the school is its ever extending links into the wider community. Some of the pupils attend mainstream schools and colleges part of the week and enjoy links to the local football club, social groups and sports groups. Amongst a range of activities enjoyed by the children and young people is swimming, trampolining, and skiing, with a forthcoming skiing trip to Colorado for children of all abilities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The children and young people have their views taken fully into account at the school. They have an active school council; information is produced in Braille and audio format. Staff are creative when obtaining the opinions of the children who are unable to verbalise these. Key workers also obtain the children and young people's views, and there is a school radio station run by the children and young people.

When the children leave the school they are given at least three choices as to where they go next to continue their education. Individual learning profiles are in place to give staff guidance about how an individual best learns. An individual's religious or cultural needs are also clearly noted in care plans. The care plans have been updated and provide a clear and concise guide to staff regarding how the care needs of the child or young person will be best met.

Transition in to the school and leaving the school are sensitively and comprehensively handled. The school has an assessment centre, where prior to joining the school, a child and their parents can stay so that their care needs can be understood and a decision about whether the school is appropriate to meet these needs can be made.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residences for the school children offer a good standard of homely and well maintained accommodation. They are warm and well equipped with appropriate disability equipment. Much work has been undertaken to improve the quality of the accommodation and this work is ongoing. A programme of refurbishment is in place for the College which will maximise the young people's independence and provide larger rooms for wheelchair users as the current bedrooms do not allow for full freedom of movement. All areas of the residences are clean and warm.

The grounds are spacious and include a sensory garden and fully accessible areas through the use of railings and paths. There is a well equipped playground for the younger children and an area for football and running.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is strong leadership and management at the school, that has resulted in good improvements throughout the care settings. The management team has a clear focus on continual improvement and development to further enhance the care services offered at the school.

There is a statement of purpose that sets out the care services offered at the school, and a learner's guide. These documents are available in Braille and an audio format.

Staffing levels are appropriate to meet the needs of the children and young people. The use of agency staff is limited. Staff report that they feel well supported and supervised and had received suitable amounts of training in key areas so that they could provide a good, safe level of care. Clear lines of accountability are in place. There are qualified nurses on duty at all times, and senior managers are available during evenings and weekends. Staff receive an induction programme, and an ongoing programme of training and development.

The care and welfare manager is experienced and well qualified. Staff leading shifts in the school and college residences have substantial relevant experience. There is a suitable amount of the staff team qualified to NVQ Level 3 in care. Communication between all staff is good. There are meetings, handovers and joint planning arrangements in place. Any notifiable events are recorded and sent to the appropriate agencies.

Records maintained in the residences are of a good level, and are continually monitored, developed and reviewed by managers. There is an ongoing programme of quality assurance in place.

Governors visit regularly, and are well informed about the services provided. Reports following their monitoring visits are comprehensive and up to date.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Equality and diversity features prominently in the school's policies and procedures and equality and diversity is implicit within the ethos, culture and practice in the school and residences.

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):

- ensure that a record of staff who have undertaken a fire drill is maintained. (NMS 26)
- ensure the privacy of children and young people when they are changing for a swimming session in the swimming pool changing rooms. (NMS 3)
- ensure that the duration of any physical intervention is consistently recorded. (NMS 10)