

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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Date of last inspection	2 February 2009

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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

The purpose of this announced key inspection was to check that the national minimum standards, and the recommendations made at the previous inspection have been met.

There are some outstanding features to this school. The school provides education and care to learners, many of whom have a diverse and complex range of care needs in addition to a visual impairment. The staff provide individualised care to each learner, with a very good system of reviewing and monitoring the care provided. This provides a consistent approach with good communication between education and care staff, and proactive involvement from a range of health professionals. Parents are encouraged to be partners with the school. The learners are provided with some excellent activities, designed to increase their independence and self confidence.

The learners are looked after by a committed and competent staff team who clearly enjoy looking after them. Relationships were seen to be warm and nurturing. Learners have a say in all aspects of the school and have recently been fully involved in a project to build two new residence blocks that, as a result of the learners input, have been designed to environmentally meet all of their care needs.

Typical feedback about the school from parents is as follows:

'Overall the West of England is a fantastic school offering a wide range of social and educational opportunities that my child takes advantage of and enjoys immensely.'

'This is a very caring environment that has truly helped our child to shed their inhibitions, fear of the world, and reluctance to participate and become more self assured and aware.'

There are four recommendations as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There has been a continual approach in the school to drive forward improvement and this has been effectively applied in addressing previously raised recommendations. This has meant that privacy curtains have been installed in the changing rooms of the swimming pool that ensure the learners' privacy and dignity when changing to go swimming. Also, the length of any physical interventions is now recorded in the physical intervention records. A record is now being kept of staff who have undertaken a fire drill practice.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The learners at the school have complex and diverse health care needs, and the school has developed excellent health care plans, which detail health care needs and how these will be met. The school has suitably qualified and trained nursing staff who are always on duty, and are able to offer training and advice to care and education staff regarding any health issues. Staff are trained to administer medication and older learners are assisted to self medicate if they prefer, following a risk assessment and monitoring.

The school has excellent links to a variety of health professionals, including the services of a psychologist, occupational therapist, mobility specialist and language therapist. The school has a dedicated therapy team working at the school and an on site consultant Ophthalmologist, Orthoptist, and Optometrist. The learners are also encouraged to access a variety of health services in the community, including dentists, and General Practitioners.

There are a number of extra curriculum activities that promote healthy living and exercise, including use of the hydro pool, the swimming pool, walking activities and bikes. Learners use mobility routes around the school to orientate themselves around the campus.

Staff are knowledgeable about the dietary needs of the learners, and prompt cards are used at mealtimes on the dining room table to list the individual care needs and preferences of the learners at mealtimes. Mealtimes are a relaxed and social occasion where the learners are offered appropriate help in a sensitive and discreet manner whilst ensuring that all learners are as independent as possible. Learners said that they are included in the menu planning and some learners shop, prepare and cook meals as part of their preparation for independent and semi independent living when they leave school. Healthy eating is encouraged as part of a healthy lifestyle, and the menus reflect the cultural needs and preferences of the learners.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff at the school respect the privacy and dignity of the learners. 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 sensitivity. Staff have an awareness of gender issues and the personal preferences of the learners.

There is a complaints procedure in place. Learners were aware of who to go to if they have a concern or a complaint. The complaints procedure is not currently available in a variety of accessible formats that are suitable for some of the learners.

There is an excellent focus on safeguarding at the school. All staff are familiar with, and confident in using the safeguarding procedures. Learners have safeguarding files, and safeguarding concerns in the school have been robustly addressed. Staff have received comprehensive safeguarding training. There is a comprehensive missing learner policy and procedure in place that staff are familiar with and which will be effective should a learner go missing.

Learners believe that they are protected from bullying. There has recently been a counter bullying week at the school. There has been discussion with the learners around cyber bullying. Recently a 'caught you caring' campaign was launched to reward learners when they showed a high level of caring for others.

Positive behaviour is encouraged at the school, and there is a high level of understanding about the reasons for any behaviour that is challenging. A psychologist is available to offer advice and develop a behaviour management plan if necessary. It is rare that sanctions are imposed, or physical intervention by staff to manage behaviour. The physical intervention policy does not currently state that only staff who are trained should participate in any physical interventions. Most staff are well trained in undertaking a safe physical intervention, and said that only trained staff undertake physical interventions. Learners are encouraged to decide on an appropriate sanction for themselves to encourage them to take greater ownership for their behaviour.

Risk assessments are in place for individuals, staff, the building and activities outside of the school. Learners are involved in their own risk assessments to encourage them to take responsibility for their own safety.

Health and safety is generally well monitored in the school. Learners spoken with said that they are confident about the action to take in the event of a fire. There are some gaps in the recording of maintenance checks of fire prevention equipment, which is undertaken by an outside company.

Staff who are recruited are suitably checked prior to starting work at the school to ensure the safety of the learners.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is an excellent system of communication in place between the school and the care staff, who attend review meetings at the school and discuss areas of concern, risk assessments and behaviour management plans.

The learners take part in an extensive range of activities, including moorland expeditions, swimming, football, shopping in the city centre, sailing and horse riding. Learners said that they could suggest activities and these would be arranged by staff if possible. Where a learner cannot verbally communicate their wishes then staff are tuned in to their body language and gestures in order to gain their views and wishes. One parent wrote 'each student has their own unique abilities, but each appears to be encouraged to be and do as much as they can.'

Transition in to the school, and leaving the school are sensitively handled, and include extensive communication with the destination or previous school of the learner and visits from staff. The

school has an assessment centre, where prior to joining the school, a prospective learner and their parents can stay so that their care needs can be understood and a decision about whether the school is appropriate for them can be made jointly with parents and carers.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Learners and their families are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to have an input into the way that the school and college is run. There are innovative projects at the school such as 'parents as partners', where parents can contribute to strategic decisions. Questionnaires are completed by the learners regarding the care provision at the school and to gather their ideas. There are different communication systems in operation at the school, including braille, a communication system using pictures, and sign language.

Communication frequency, and in what format, is agreed with parents when a learner begins at the school. Placement plans are excellent. They are comprehensive and informative regarding all aspects of a learner's care needs and placement objectives and aims. An individual's cultural and religious needs are fully addressed in the care plan. There is a key worker system in place. Learners are encouraged and supported to take control of their person centred review that have a focus on the learner and what they hope to achieve at the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residences for the school offer learners a good standard of homely and generally well maintained accommodation. They are well equipped with appropriate disability aids and equipment. Much work has been undertaken to improve the quality of the accommodation and this work is ongoing. The new residence that has just been completed has been designed with the full involvement of the learners and will be ready for them to move into shortly. One block has been specially equipped to meet the needs of wheelchair users, as the current accommodation limits their mobility due to lack of space. Both new blocks are designed so that the learners are able to be as independent as possible. All residences are clean and warm. One block has had a water leak and is due to be repaired.

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

Work has been undertaken to further improve the transition from the school to independent living. Learners are encouraged to undertake their own laundry, shopping, cooking and cleaning. A transition plan is formulated for when a learner leaves the school, and a transition day is held for learners and parents to look at future options.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There has been a restructure at the school recently, and this has further improved communication and staff roles. Each residence is led by a care manager and allocated senior care staff. The management team provides strong and effective leadership, and staff report feeling well supported and supervised.

There is a Statement of Purpose that sets out the care services offered at the school, and a learner's guide that is available in braille and an audio format. Some policies and procedures are not up to date with information about Ofsted, for example contact telephone numbers and the address.

Staffing levels are appropriate to meet the needs of the learners. The use of agency staff is limited. The staff training programme is comprehensive and provides the staff with the skills that they need to properly care for the learners. Clear lines of accountability are in place. Staff receive a thorough induction when they start work and there is an ongoing programme of training and development.

Staff leading shifts in the school and college residences have substantial relevant care experience. There is a suitable number of the staff team who have appropriate qualifications. Communication between staff is good, and there are regular meetings, handovers and joint planning arrangements in place. Any notifiable events are recorded and sent to the appropriate agencies.

Recording systems in the residences are thorough and comprehensive and are continually monitored, developed and reviewed by the management team. There is an ongoing programme of quality assurance in place.

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

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 all policies and procedures are updated to include Ofsted in the contact telephone numbers (NMS 32).
- ensure the damage made by a water leak to the ceiling and wall in one of the bathrooms in Nell Arran is repaired (NMS 24).
- ensure that physical intervention policies and procedures state that only staff who have received training to undertake physical interventions are to do so (NMS10).
- ensure that fire alarms and fire prevention equipment is tested in line with fire regulations (NMS 26).