

New College Worcester

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Andrew Hewston
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 is a non-maintained special school and exists to provide an appropriate education for young people with a visual impairment, primarily within the 11 to 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

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection and it covered all the key national minimum standards in the Every Child Matters outcome groups plus organisation.

Young people receive a high level of care from the school staff team and there is a good range of outstanding practices that enhance their school and residential experience. The school has a strong senior management team that ensures young people receive care and support in achieving independence. The school continues to develop in its ability to offer a residential experience that fully meets the needs of young people with a range of visual impairments. Strong links between the residential and teaching areas support an effective learning environment.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has implemented the six recommendations made at the previous inspection. A policy is now in place to respond to concerns of privacy relating to the waking night staff. Complaints and behaviour management records are now fully recorded within the required areas. Information regarding the ability to contact an independent person is available within residential areas. Care plans now contain all information relating to contact and how this is able to be completed. A staffing audit has resulted in six additional care staff being recruited to ensure improved consistency and enhance young people's residential experience.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school ensures that young people's health needs are well supported. All of the school staff have a strong awareness of young people's health needs relating to the complexities of visual impairment. The staff are also able to discuss how they support differing health needs that young people display at the school. Specific needs are assessed as part of young people's admission to the school, a health plan is developed from this and this forms part of each individual's care plan package to guide appropriate care. Throughout young people's time at the school they are fully supported with their sensory impairments. Young people are able to discuss how the school has helped them to develop confidence in living life with a visual impairment.

The previous school nurse has retired and two part time nurses are now in position. The nurses have a good awareness of differing facets of supporting young people and offer a range of expertise to the school including an awareness of mental health needs. The school has a visiting General Practitioner who is able to prescribe medication to those registered with him. Recording systems relating to health are kept within young people's health plans, medication recordings and the nurses' information. Some information regarding concerns about young people's health needs is not clearly kept within the care plan to show that there are issues and how these have been responded to. Systems are in place to refer young people to mental health services if necessary.

Medication is administered both within the home and the clinic area. Recordings of these are appropriate and staff have completed training in the administration of medication. The nurses ensure that medication is appropriately administered through regular auditing of systems. Sufficient staff have completed training in first aid and their names are prominent within the residential areas.

The provision of meals at the school is good; young people enjoy a good range of foods within the school. The dining experience for young people is appropriately structured for differing diets to be catered for and young people to sit with their friends and peers. Mealtimes are relaxed social occasions. Rolling menus are changed on a termly basis and these are checked for their nutritional value. At the weekends meals are taken within the residential areas and these are prepared by staff that have completed food hygiene training. Young people are consulted on a regular basis regarding their preferences for meals.

Sixth form students are supported with the budgeting, shopping and preparation of their meals through the school's independence living scheme. They are however still able to access the school's canteen if necessary.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy is supported through records being stored appropriately and good systems being in place that allow young people to contact family and friends in relative privacy. The school has procedures in place that relate to privacy and staff are aware of how to share information. For example, staff ensure that young people's health needs are discussed and dealt with in a sensitive and discreet way.

Systems are in place to respond to complaints made by young people and their families. Complaints that have been received are fully recorded and show that there have been investigations, with outcomes available. Information regarding who young people can talk to if they have worries is available within all of the residential areas and information is also given young people on admission to the school. Some information relating to the previous regulator has not been updated to Ofsted. Young people state that if they are unhappy, 'there are enough people around who help you sort stuff out'. Systems to support young people are in place including the key worker system, the school's pastoral team, the school counsellor and the new school 'hub'.

The safeguarding of young people is a high priority within the school. All staff and volunteers within the school have completed training in safeguarding and there is information about it available within the school reception. Links are in place with the Local Authority Designated Officer so that any child protection concerns can be discussed, and young people and staff have been involved with training relating to keeping safe on the internet. No safeguarding concerns have been raised since the last inspection at the school. Appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and guidance is available for staff. Young people state that they feel safe within the school and one young person stated that New College was "the first school where (they) have been able to relax and enjoy themselves because other people were not having a go at them".

There are appropriate systems in place to respond to bullying within the school. Although disagreements between young people do occur the staff are seen to respond to issues effectively. Problems are examined through key worker meetings and ongoing discussions as well as young people talking through any issues raised. No young people spoken to as part of the inspection or through questionnaires state that bullying is a problem within the school.

Procedural guidance is in place should young people absent themselves from the school grounds without permission. This has been developed with the local police and ensures the safety of the young people. There have been no instances of this behaviour since the last inspection. Young people are aware of the differing 'zones' that they are able to be in around the school.

Staff ensure that positive behaviours are promoted within the school and residential

areas. All measures of control that have been used are fully recorded, within appropriate recording systems, although instances of the need for these are low. Staff are trained and able to divert negative behaviours well, which ensure that these do not escalate into an issue that requires physical intervention. There have been no restraints at the school for five years. Young people are observed respecting each others differences and there are celebrations of positive communal living including meals outside the school and young people working with each other through activities.

Young people and staff are kept safe through robust health and safety checks. A comprehensive range of risk assessments regarding the needs of young people, activities and the residential areas have been completed and are checked on a regular basis. Fire checks and drills are completed regularly, although the clarity of records within the hostel relating to drills needs some development. Fire safety forms part of the managerial monitoring system and these show that checks are up to date.

The school has a robust recruitment system that ensures all staff have been thoroughly checked prior to working at the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are outstanding examples of cohesive practices between the school and residential environments. All information regarding school and home targets is shared and there is an effective deployment of staff that ensures that support for young people is linked between these two areas. Residential and teaching staff are jointly involved in the examination of need and jointly plan for how these are to be met while they live at the school. Therefore children experience both consistent and productive support which sustains them to achieve both in and out of school.

Young people benefit from outstanding individual support. Key to this is a committed residential staff group, who have excellent skills in day-to-day communication, and give young people additional tools to enable better participation and inclusion. The addition of a thumb scanner to ensure a young person can access their accommodation without having to use the code system is a practical example of this. A lot of thought goes into how young people can be fully supported, either as groups or individuals. There are a range of systems both within the residential and school environments that ensure young people are able to access support if they need it, including dedicated learning support assistants, key workers and volunteers. Young people can access an independent listener or advocate and information about this is available within the homes.

Young people are encouraged to experience life-enhancing activities and new opportunities. Staff balance the risks and the benefit and minimise unnecessary risks whilst ensuring that opportunities for enjoyment and personal development are maximised. Young people have thorough individual risk assessments which help to

keep them secure. Staff have a real commitment to encouraging young people to get the most out of life.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The views of parents and young people are sought through a good range of discussion opportunities. Although some parents state that communication between school and home decreases when young people move to the sixth form area this reflects the increased level of independence that the young people are then afforded. Meetings are held within the residential homes to discuss ongoing issues, these are recorded. It is not as clear when meetings have taken place within the hostel area. Young people are involved with a school council and discussions have a direct input into some decision making processes within the school.

The proactive relationships between staff and young people are a strength to the school. Young people and staff share information on a relaxed basis and there is a good level of humorous banter where appropriate. Young people are able to discuss how they have been involved in their reviews and how they have an effect on the plans that are in place for them. All young people have a thorough care plan. Due to the wealth of information within the care plans, specific targets being worked on with young people are sometimes not clear. Contact arrangements form part of the care plans. Care staff and young people are in regular contact with parents where necessary.

All young people are assessed prior to admission and thoughtful plans are in place to ensure that young people and their families are supported. Strong systems are in place for sixth form students who are moving back home, into independence or into higher education including coordinating with universities what the specific needs of the visually impaired student are and how these are best met. The whole school independence living programme has developed since the last inspection with external funding of a new room within the school block. The ability of young people to develop their independence skills throughout their school life is a central theme to the residential experience.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The whole school independence living programme has developed since the last inspection due to external funding of a new room within the school block. The ability of young people to develop their independence skills throughout their school life is a central theme to the residential experience. There are excellent arrangements to ensure that young people learn the skills they need for adult life and achieve their full potential. Parents say that staff encourage safe independence and choice with

their children. Staff appear to see each activity and opportunity as a learning experience.

The accommodation is of a good standard throughout the school campus. All residential areas feel cared for by the staff team and the young people, although there is a need for the continuation of the refurbishment of the hostel kitchens. Staff work hard to create colourful displays within the dining areas of the homes, including information about the range of activities available and bright photographs. Each home has their own character and young people are able to personalise their own rooms.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management of the school are imaginative, responsive and effective. Young people are well served by the provision as identified by its Statement of Purpose. The Statement is updated on a regular basis and clearly identifies how the school and residential units supports the young people. Staffing across the residential accommodation is appropriate to meet the needs of the young people. This is in the process of being further enhanced by additional staff and this shows that the senior management team have a strong commitment to ensuring the development of the young people throughout their school experience. The senior team have responded to the leaving of the head of care swiftly, and his responsibilities have been thoughtfully distributed throughout the team to ensure consistent practice.

All staff receive a comprehensive induction, regular supervision and annual appraisals. They are provided with comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance that promote the strong values and ethos of the school. Staff, throughout their employment, receive a comprehensive range of in-house and external training to ensure their childcare practice remains up to date. As a result, staff are suitably trained to support the diverse needs of young people with visual impairments and additional needs. Planning is in place to ensure that new staff are to be trained to a level in line with the expectations of the new national minimum standards.

The senior management team, the acting head of care and headteacher, ensure excellent management and monitoring to drive improvement and refine systems for quality assurance and review. Feedback, views and contributions are valued and the headteacher has a clear vision of development at the school. The governing body is active and well informed and plays a crucial role in monitoring the welfare of the children in the school through insightful and rigorous termly audits of the residential provision.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school has a strong equality and diversity policy and recently received an award for the high level of inclusivity within the school and residential areas. Staff fully support young people's individual needs

although evidence of how this is completed needs some development within young people's files.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that health plans contain information regarding health concerns and how these are being met (NMS 14.6)
- ensure young people and parents are aware of how to make complaints directly to Ofsted (NMS 4.8)
- ensure that care plans clearly show the young people's assessed needs and how these are being met (NMS 17.1)
- ensure the refurbishment of the kitchens continues, to provide good quality accommodation to all of the resident young people (NMS 24.1)