



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Residential Special School (not registered as
a Children's Home)

West Of England School and College

Topsham Road
Countess Wear
Exeter
Devon
EX2 6HA

16 - 18 March 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School

The West Of England School and College

Address

Topsham Road, Countess Wear, Exeter, Devon, EX2 6HA

Tel No:

01392 454200

Fax No:

01392 428048

Email Address:

info@westengland.devon.sch.uk

Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school

West of England School and College

Name of Head

Mr Paul Holland

NCSC Classification

Residential Special School

Type of school

Residential Special

School

Date of last boarding welfare inspection:

10/02/03

Date of Inspection Visit		16 March 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00	
Name of NCSC Inspector	1	Romana Young	105157
Name of NCSC Inspector	2	Jim Palmer	
Name of NCSC Inspector	3	Rachel Fleet	
Name of NCSC Inspector	4		
Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):			
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Paul Holland, principal & Paula Lahey, acting director of care	

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Residential Special Schools are subject to inspection by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) to determine whether the welfare of children (i.e. those aged under 18) is adequately safeguarded and promoted while they are accommodated by the school.

Inspections assess the extent to which the school is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, published by the Secretary of State under Section 87C of the Children Act 1989, and other relevant requirements of the Children Act 1989 as amended. Residential Special Schools are not registered as children's homes unless they accommodate, or arrange accommodation for, one or more children for more than 295 days a year.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of West Of England School For Children With Little Or No Sight

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Recommended action by the school
- Advisory recommendations on boarding welfare
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the lay assessor (where relevant)
- The Head's response and proposed action plan to address findings

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections are undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989 as amended, with additional visits as required.

The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL AND RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

The West of England School and College is a non-maintained residential special school for children and young people who are blind or who have visual impairment. In main school, students can attend as day pupils or weekly or flexi- boarders. The college provides termly boarding for post 16 students. The school currently has 90 full-time boarders and 25 part-time boarders.

The school moved to its current campus in 1965 and caters for up to 200 pupils and students aged 2 – 22 years within the four departments – the nursery, main school, St David's House and college. Boarding facilities can be provided for up to 150 pupils and students attending main school, St David's House or college.

All pupils and students have a clearly determined visual impairment and approximately one-third of students are registered blind. A significant number of pupils and students have additional needs, for example, complex medical or physical needs or specific learning difficulty. The school provides a wide range of specialist expertise on site, for example, Braille services, mobility education, the therapy and nursing care departments which provide physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, music therapy and 24 hour nursing care. The school G.P. provides a weekly surgery at the school and a clinical psychologist is also employed one day a week at the school to provide a counselling service. Other specialist services, for example, paediatric ophthalmologic consultants provide a visiting service to the school.

The residential provision consists of five boarding houses - Dinham House and Richmond House for main school male pupils, Haldon House for main school female pupils, St. David's House, for children and young people with complex needs and the College for post 16 students.

The school has charitable status and is managed by the Board of Governors.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

42 parent survey questionnaires were returned.

Statement of the school's purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was exceeded.

The school has a written Statement of Purpose that describes what the school sets out to do and the manner in which care is provided. The statement is made up of a range of documents, for example, the school prospectus and mission statement, annual reports, letter of approved arrangement, video presentation, young persons' information guide and information supplied to parents/carers and staff. The school is to be commended for in the way in which this information is presented and reviewed.

Children's rights (Standards 2-4)

These standards were met.

The opinions and views of children and young people are actively sought through individual sessions with key workers and tutors, house meetings, annual reviews and school council

meetings. In the college, where there are individual programmes in place to help prepare post 16 students for future independent living, there was considerable evidence of young people being encouraged and supported by staff to make their own decisions concerning their future plans. The inspectors found that staff strive hard to ensure that families and significant others are informed about their child's progress and involved in making key decisions, particularly in St David's House, where the children and young people with more complex physical and communication needs reside. Parents agreed, overwhelmingly, in the parent survey, that they have been asked how they think their child should be cared for in the school, that staff seek their opinion before any big decisions are made about their child and that they are listened to.

There is a written policy and practice guidance for staff on privacy and confidentiality and providing intimate care and staff practice observed operated within those guidelines. Staff are very aware of the need to keep personal information confidential and secure – both verbally and in writing - and where and with whom information needs to be/should be shared for the child's welfare and protection. Young people reported to the inspectors that, generally, they felt that their privacy and dignity are respected.

Young people know how to and to whom they could make a complaint if they needed to. Most parents agreed that they have received a leaflet or some other written information, from the school, about how to make a complaint if they need to. However, a third of parents said they had not – although some of these said that they would be able to phone the school if a problem should arise. Staff are aware of the school's complaints procedure. Some staff are aware of relevant agencies outside of the school to contact should the need arise, for example, the National Care Standards Commission. The complaints record held centrally in the administration office was examined. It contained two complaints since the last inspection. It was difficult to establish from the central record if the complaint was resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, although information from other records examined appeared to indicate that this was the case.

Child protection (Standards 5-8)

These standards were met.

The school has a written child protection policy, which has been drawn up following consultation with the local authority social services department and the Area Child Protection Committee child protection handbook. The principal is the nominated child protection coordinator for the school. Staff in all departments confirmed they have received child protection awareness training and displayed knowledge of their reporting responsibilities and the child protection policy.

Students have been involved in bullying awareness workshops to highlight this issue, help children and young people express their feelings, recognise bullying behaviour and inform them who/where to go to for help. The school's written behaviour policy guidelines for staff has a section on recognising and responding to bullying behaviour. Students, generally, did not report bullying as a significant issue within the school.

The school now has a system in place to notify promptly the National Care Standards Commission of significant events. Parents said that staff are good at letting them know about things that happen with their child.

The school has policies and procedures in place which detail what actions are to be followed if a young person is absent without authority. These are covered in the absence policy, child protection and behaviour management policies.

Care & Control (Standards 9-10)

One standard was met and one was exceeded.

Staff were observed relating to the children and young people in a calm, caring and professional manner, listening positively to what the children and young people wanted to say. The children and young people were relaxed and relating well and easily to staff and one another. Staff encouraged children and young people to be inclusive and respectful to one another. There is an open and nurturing environment throughout the school where everyone, staff and students, are respected as individuals, valued and included. Excellent communication and partnership with parents is maintained. Parents feel that all staff are very supportive and caring in their relationships with the children and young people and that their child's needs are well understood and met and that socially, as well as educationally, their child is making good progress at the school. There is written guidance and training for staff in direct contact with children and young people in positive care and control of children and young people including giving praise for achievements. Students feel that the school is a good place to live.

The school has a written behaviour management policy which includes the six stages for dealing with unacceptable behaviour, guidance to staff on recognising and rewarding desired behaviour and prohibited sanctions. Staff are aware of the school's policy on behaviour management and the use of positive interventions. Records and questionnaire survey responses showed that no inappropriate sanction has been imposed. Young people generally feel that staff are fair when sanctions are used and that staff discuss behaviour and sanctions used with young people. The use of sanctions is regularly reviewed by senior managers and visiting governors. Staff receive training in the use of control and restraint techniques. Control and restraint techniques are rarely used - all such incidents are recorded in individual files, and records kept in the separate departments. The system of recording used was well maintained, and worked well on a multi-disciplinary campus.

Quality of care (Standards 11-16)

Two standards were met, three were exceeded and one was almost met.

Admission and leaving process are sensitively planned and handled. Children and young people visit the school with their family before admission when a comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment is undertaken. Key staff visit the child and parent at home to ensure that the admission is as well planned as possible. Each young person who boards is allocated a key worker. This is decided on an individual basis, to suit the young person. The school does not take emergency admissions. Transition plans are drawn up for students moving on.

Care staff actively support children's education, ensuring regular attendance, punctuality and a minimum of interruption during the school day. There are daily handover sessions between the teaching staff and the care staff, attended by the acting head of care for care staff to inform teaching staff of any information which will assist in supporting the child or young person in school time. There are regular meetings between tutors and key workers. There is evidence of close, effective liaison and communication between the two groups of staff. Children have ample opportunity to engage in a wide range of purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community. Staff are to be commended for their vision and dedication in instigating and supporting such excellent opportunities for students to try out new experiences and develop new skills.

The school actively promotes the health care of each child and meets any intimate care needs. The school employs nursing staff to provide on-site 24 hour nursing care during the week and an on-call qualified nursing service at weekends for college students. The school G.P. holds a weekly surgery at the school. Additional therapeutic support from a clinical psychologist is also provided. Two recommendations were made - that the school should secure a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription "household" medicines to

children and young people and during staff training on Stesolid administration, that an anatomical training aid is used.

The school provides children and young people with healthy, wholesome and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs. Where appropriate special dietary needs due to health, religious persuasion, racial origin or cultural background are met, including the choice of a vegetarian meal for children who wish it. Children and young people are consulted about menus.

Children and young people are able to bring their own clothing to school, have suitable space to store these and are able to exercise their own preferences in the choice of clothing outside of school time. The school has laundry facilities on site and there are individual washing machines and dryers available for students' use (mainly post 16). Students confirmed that students are able to choose how to spend their own money.

Planning for care (Standards 17-22)

Three standards were met and three were exceeded.

Children and young people have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at the school. Each child or young person has a permanent, private and secure record of their history and progress which can, in compliance with legal requirements for safeguards, be seen by the child or young person.

The school holds centrally, in the admin office, a register of children which holds all the required information. In addition, an employees' register is held which shows the required information, except whether the employee is resident at the school. The inspector was told that only the principal resides on the school campus. The register of employees should also include details of agency staff and volunteers which it does not currently do. The school has agreed to address this. Records are kept securely in the main admin office and, where required, stored for at least five years from the date of the last entry.

Children and young people are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while living away from home at the school. Where there are any restrictions on contact, these are as agreed in the placement plan and are recorded in individual files. The school has an "open door" policy and very much welcomes visits by parents, members of the extended family and others significant to children and young people. Overnight accommodation can be provided where necessary. Parents feel they are encouraged to visit the school and confirmed that they can see their child in private when they visit. Parents said that staff are "very welcoming", "friendly" and hospitable during their visits to the school. Parents confirmed that staff keep in good contact with them about issues and concerns relating to their child.

Young people about to leave care or move into independent living are prepared for the transition. The school is pro-active in supporting young people to move on into the wider community and has developed close and effective links with other agencies, for example, local colleges, Connexions, housing associations and potential employers to assist with this. Practice in this area is commendable.

Children and young people are given a high level of individual support. Additional professional support is provided as identified in the care plan or annual review. Each child or young person who boards has an allocated key worker. All students also have an individual tutor. There is good liaison between these groups of staff. Discussion with children and young people confirmed they are able to talk to staff when they feel they need support. The school also employs a clinical psychologist who provides a counselling service in addition to the specialist medical and therapeutic services, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, music therapy, and mobility.

Parents view the staff expertise and knowledge of visual impairment as one of the greatest

features of the school. Many parents commented that the range of specialist services provided on site and the close collaboration between the different departments at the school ensures excellent holistic care and education is provided for their child. Parents commented very positively on the individualised and specialised support their child receives at the school. Again, practice in this area is commendable.

Premises (Standards 23-26)

Three standards were met and one was almost met.

The school is located, designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. It serves the needs of the children and young people well. The school has extensive and attractive grounds with enclosed playgrounds equipped with fixed play equipment, a sensory garden area, running track and sports pitches and a swimming pool. The campus now has its own radio station operated by students. The campus and buildings are maintained to a high level. The boarding accommodation is well maintained and decorated to a good standard. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms, if they wish. Main school boarding accommodation has been enhanced by a programme of redecoration and replacement of some bedroom carpets/flooring since the last inspection. The accommodation in the college is of a very high standard. Bedrooms were seen to have sufficient and suitable furniture, fittings and heating. All bedrooms have windows for ventilation and natural light. Where needed, the school provides appropriate specialist equipment. St. David's House has a high standard of accommodation, with specialist equipment installed to meet the complex needs of the children. All boarding houses have wheel chair access to downstairs areas. A new ramped area has been installed at Dinham House.

The school has sufficient baths, showers and toilets for both students and staff.

There is a planned programme of refurbishment and improvement of toilet and bathing facilities in main school boarding accommodation in progress. This includes improving facilities for disabled users.

Positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards, in accordance with Health and Safety and Fire legislation and guidance. Campus security has been reviewed and additional security measures put into place. A further review will take place taking into concerns raised by a parent in the parent questionnaire survey. It is recommended that water thermometers be supplied so that staff can check hot water temperatures for bathing where necessary.

Staffing (Standards 27-30)

These standards were met.

The school recruitment process is set out in the staff recruitment and selection guidelines policy document. Staff confirmed the recruitment and selection process used. A task group has reviewed the recruitment and selection policy over the past year.

Observation, staff rotas and discussions with staff confirmed that adequate staffing numbers are maintained. Staffing ratios are increased on the identification of specific needs for individual children – this was much in evidence during the inspection visit.

Staff view the training they have received as very useful in equipping them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the school. Discussions with staff confirmed the induction process and training for care and ancillary staff. Staff have access to relevant policies and procedures. In discussion, staff confirmed that they have a personal development plan. Parents feel that staff are very caring and professional and look after their child very well.

The school has clear management structures in place. Staff spoken to were well aware of

that structure and to whom they are accountable. All staff have a job description and undergo an induction training programme and probationary period. All staff receive supervision and have an annual appraisal. Staff are given practice handbooks and access to and training on the school's policies and procedures.

Organisation and management (Standards 31-33)

These standards were met.

The school is well managed and organised with a clear management structure which provides excellent leadership and support to staff and students. The senior management team, care teams and other professional staff groups meet regularly to ensure that good interdepartmental communication is maintained so that individual needs are recognised and met. The school has now arranged for Penwith College in Cornwall to provide a distance-learning course for care staff to undertake NVQ levels 2 and 3 in caring for children and young people. Staff rotas have time scheduled to ensure that staff supervisions, handover sessions and meetings, record keeping, planning, implementing and reviewing care programmes and spending time interacting with individual children occur without compromising overall care of children. Parents overwhelmingly agreed that staff do a good job of caring for their child. Parents have a high regard for the way in which the school is organised, managed and staffed. The majority who responded to the parent questionnaire survey said that they felt that the staff were excellent and should be commended for the high standard of care and education that is provided.

The school has a system in place to meet the requirements of National Minimum Standard 32.1. The principal or senior members of staff, delegated by the head teacher to do so, monitor records to identify any patterns or issues requiring action.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE
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<p>Again, the inspectors found that there are a number of areas where practice was commendable – for example the excellent range of leisure and social activities available, both on campus and in the local community, the individual specialist support the school provides for children and young people, multi – disciplinary working and communication within the school, the strong commitment to staff development and training, communication and working with parents and the involvement of children and young people in planning and decision making.</p>
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<p>There is strong liaison between staff teams, in particular, teaching and care staff, which contributes to good assessments and understanding of children's needs. Children and young people related to staff and one another with mutual respect.</p>
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<p>Children and young people feel that the school is a good place to live. Parents feel that the school is meeting their child's needs well.</p>
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WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

The school should continue with the planned upgrading and refurbishment of main boarding accommodation, particularly the toilet and washing facilities.
The school should continue with improving access and facilities for wheelchair users in boarding accommodation.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

This report is the second by the National Care Standards Commission under the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools.

Parents view the school very positively and feel that their child's needs are well met by a caring, professional and dedicated staff team. They feel that staff communicate well with them, make them feel welcome at the school and that they are consulted about and included in their child's education and care at the school.

The school has an open and friendly ethos and is strongly committed to providing a specialist centre of excellence in education and care for children and young people who are blind or have a visual impairment.

The standard of care and commitment to meeting the students' needs in an individualised way is commendable. The multi-disciplinary approach throughout the school and cooperation and good communication between staff teams means that all staff work well together to ensure that individual needs are met. The principal and senior management team provide a strong system of support and guidance to staff and students.

The inspectors would like to thank the young people, the staff and the principal for their warm welcome, co-operation and assistance during the inspection.

NOTIFICATIONS TO LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY OR SECRETARY OF STATE

NO

**Local Education Authority
Secretary of State**

NO

NO

The grounds for any Notification to be made are:

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM LAST INSPECTION

YES

No	Standard	Recommended actions	

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The Head is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how recommended action and any advisory recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Identified below are the actions recommended on issues addressed in the main body of the report in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders adequately in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The references below are to the relevant Standards. Non-implementation of recommended action can lead to future statutory notification of failure to safeguard and promote welfare.

No	Standard*	Recommended Action	

ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

Identified below are advisory recommendations on welfare matters addressed in the main body of the report and based on the National Minimum Standards, made for consideration by the school.

No	Refer to Standard*	Recommendation
1	26	The school should provide bath thermometers so that staff, where necessary, can ensure that the hot water temperature in a bath is safe.
2	14	The school should secure a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription "household" medicines to children and young people.
3	14	The school should ensure, during staff training on Stesolid administration, that an anatomical training aid is used.

Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the

2-letter prefix. E.g. RS10 refers to standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS AND FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods were used in the production of this report

Direct Observation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Accommodation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Recreational Areas	YES

Checks with other Organisations

• Social Services	YES
• Fire Service	YES
• Environmental Health	YES
• DfES	NO
• School Doctor	NO
• Independent Person	NO
• Chair of Governors	YES
Tracking individual welfare arrangements	YES
Survey / individual discussions with boarders	YES
Group discussions with boarders	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group interviews with House staff teams	YES
Staff Survey	YES
Meals taken with pupils	YES
Early morning and late evening visits	YES
Visit to Sanatorium / Sick Bay	YES
Parent Survey	YES
Placing authority survey	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Individual interview with pupil(s)	NO
Answer-phone line for pupil/staff comments	NO

Date of Inspection	16/03/04
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs.)	37
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	10.5

Pre-inspection information and the Head's Self-evaluation Form, provided by the school, have also been taken into account in preparing this report.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Age Range of Boarding Pupils **From** **To**

NUMBER OF BOARDERS AT TIME OF INSPECTION:

BOYS

GIRLS

TOTAL

Number of separate Boarding Houses

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 3 - Standard Met | (No Shortfalls) |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

STATEMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S PURPOSE

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.

Standard 1 (1.1 – 1.9)

The school has a written Statement of Purpose, which accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those children it accommodates, and the manner in which care is provided. The Statement can be made up of other documents, e.g., Letter of Approved Arrangements and school prospectus, which are required to include specific information.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The school has a written Statement of Purpose that describes what the school sets out to do for the children and young people it accommodates and the manner in which care is provided. The statement is made up of a range of documents, for example, the school prospectus and mission statement, annual reports, letter of approved arrangement, video presentation, young persons' information guide and information supplied to parents/carers and staff.

The range of needs to be met under the statement of purpose are capable of being fulfilled by the school as it currently operates and the school only admits children and young people whose assessed needs can be met within the purpose of the school.

All policy documents are subject of an annual review process. The inspector was informed that the school prospectus is going to be reviewed next term.

The school is to be commended for in the way in which this information is presented and reviewed.

16 staff survey questionnaires were returned. These confirmed that staff are aware of the purpose of the school.

42 parent survey questionnaires were returned. All parents who responded confirmed that they had been given a leaflet or some other written information telling them what they needed to know about the school.

Copies of the prospectus and annual report are sent to placing authorities each July or as requested.

Evidence: pre-inspection questionnaire, school prospectus and mission statement, annual report, young persons' information guide, staff and parents' questionnaire survey responses.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way that the school is run. No child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views.
- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.

Standard 2 (2.1 – 2.9)

Children's opinions, and those of their families or significant others, are sought over key decisions which are likely to affect their daily life and their future. Feedback is given following consultations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The opinions and views of children and young people are actively sought through individual sessions with key workers and tutors, house meetings, annual reviews and school council meetings – evidenced from discussions with students and staff, survey questionnaire responses, file notes and observation of house meetings. Young people confirmed to the inspectors that the school supports their religious observances and practices where this applies – for example, students of Christian faith are assisted to attend local church services, the local Christian Union or a church based youth club in Cullompton if they wish. In the college, where there are individual programmes in place to help prepare post 16 students for future independent living, there was considerable evidence of young people being encouraged and supported by staff to make their own decisions concerning their future plans.

The inspectors found that staff strive hard to ensure that families and significant others are informed about their child's progress and involved in making key decisions, particularly in St David's House, where the children and young people with more complex physical and communication needs reside. This is achieved, on a personal level, through regular telephone calls, home-school diaries, letters and visits and, more generally, through newsletters and school events, such as sports day, therapy days, annual parents' meeting, and other events.

In the parents' questionnaire survey, parents agreed, overwhelmingly, that they have been asked how they think their child should be cared for in the school, that staff seek their opinion before any big decisions are made about their child and that they are listened to. Most parents agreed that they are able to go to meetings about their child, for example, the annual review. However, where parents do not attend meetings, this is due, in general, to long distances between home and school.

Evidence: observation, young people's files, discussions with senior management and other staff, pre-inspection questionnaire, discussions with young people, questionnaire responses.

Standard 3 (3.1 – 3.11)

The school and staff respect a child's wish for privacy and confidentiality so far as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

There is a written policy and practice guidance for staff on privacy and confidentiality and providing intimate care. During the inspection, staff practice observed operated within those guidelines. Discussions with staff and staff questionnaire survey responses confirmed that staff are very aware of the need to keep personal information confidential and secure – both verbally and in writing - and where and with whom information needs to be/should be shared for the child's welfare and protection.

Staff from the various departments within the school – care, teaching, therapeutic and medical staff - work closely together to ensure that individual needs are being met.

Staff respect children's and young people's privacy by knocking on bedrooms doors before entering.

In discussions, and in the pupil questionnaire survey, children and young people reported to the inspectors that, generally, they felt that their privacy and dignity are respected. However, one young person indicated in their pupil questionnaire that they felt a lack of privacy in the shower/toilet. See evidence for Standard 25 for further discussion. Children and young people are able to use the telephone in privacy; many also have their own mobile phone.

There is guidance for staff on when and how searches of young people's rooms or possessions should be undertaken. Young people have also been given information regarding this - such as when or why this may be necessary.

Evidence: discussions with staff and young people, observation, policies and procedures, staff survey questionnaire responses.

Standard 4 (4.1 - 4.8)

Children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the school, and feel confident that any complaint is addressed seriously and without delay.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Discussions with students and pupil questionnaire survey responses confirmed that students know how to and to whom they could make a complaint if they needed to. Most said that they would complain to a member of the care or teaching staff, the acting director of care or the principal. Some said that general issues could be raised through their school council representative. A much smaller proportion of students said that they had been told how they could make a complaint to an inspector if they wanted to.

In the parent questionnaire survey, just over half of parents agreed that they have received a leaflet or some other written information, from the school, about how to make a complaint if they need to. However, a third of parents said they had not – although some of these said that they would be able to phone the school if a problem should arise. The remainder did not make any comment on this.

86% of the parents who responded said that they have never had to make a complaint about the school. Where parents said that they had made a complaint, the majority response was that the matter had been satisfactorily resolved through discussion with the school.

50% of the parents said that they have not been told how they can make a complaint to an inspector from the National Care Standards Commission if they need to but 36% said that they had. The remainder did not comment on this.

Staff survey questionnaire responses and discussions with staff indicated that staff are aware of the school's complaints procedure. Some staff are aware of relevant agencies outside of the school to contact should the need arise, for example, the NCSC.

The complaints record held centrally in the administration office was examined. It contained two complaints since the last inspection. It was difficult to establish from the central record if the complaint was resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, although information from other records examined appeared to indicate that this was the case.

Evidence: discussions with students and staff, central complaints record, young person's files, questionnaire survey responses.

Number of complaints about care at the school recorded over last 12 months:

2

Number of above complaints substantiated:

2

Number of complaints received by NCSC about the school over last 12 months:

0

Number of above complaints substantiated:

0

CHILD PROTECTION

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.
- Children are protected from bullying by others.
- All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the school are notified by the Head of the school to the appropriate authorities.
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded positively to on return.

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.12)

There are systems in place in the school which aim to prevent abuse of children and suspicions or allegations of abuse are properly responded to. These are known and understood by all staff (including junior, ancillary, volunteer and agency staff).

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school has a written child protection policy, which has been drawn up following consultation with the local authority social services department and the ACPC child protection handbook. This policy was updated in September 2003.

The principal is the nominated child protection coordinator for the school.

Staff in all departments confirmed they have received child protection awareness training and displayed knowledge of their reporting responsibilities and the child protection policy. Child protection training is included within the induction training programme and there are refresher training sessions held on a regular basis.

Staff confirmed in their staff survey questionnaire responses and in discussions that they had received child protection training in the past 12 months.

Evidence: policies and procedures, pre-inspection questionnaire, discussions with staff, discussions with senior management, survey questionnaire responses.

Number of recorded child protection enquiries initiated by the social services department during the past 12 months:

2

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.5)

The school has, and follows, an anti-bullying policy, with which children and staff are familiar and which is effective in practice. Where possible children in the school contribute to the development of the policy.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Students have been involved in bullying awareness workshops to highlight this issue, help children and young people express their feelings, recognise bullying behaviour and inform them who/where to go to for help. Group discussions with students from main school and college confirmed that the workshops had been effective in opening up this issue as a subject for discussion and helping students understand that staff would be supportive and take seriously situations where bullying behaviour is reported or observed.

Some staff confirmed in their staff questionnaire survey responses and discussion that they had received training on bullying awareness within the past twelve months.

The school's written behaviour policy guidelines for staff have a section on recognising and responding to bullying behaviour.

Pupil questionnaire survey responses from 24 students were obtained. The pupil questionnaire format is not a suitable means of communication for a significant proportion of students, so a whole school survey was not achievable. The results of this small sample survey cannot, therefore, be taken as representative of the school as a whole. However, it was positive to note that 80% of the students who returned a questionnaire said that they are not at all or hardly ever bullied. The remaining 20% who reported bullying cited teasing, "rumours", name-calling and pushing as instances of this but reported these as mainly isolated incidents and not systematic.

Students, generally, did not report bullying as a significant issue within the school.

Evidence: observation, discussions with students and staff, policies and procedures, pupil and staff survey questionnaire responses.

Percentage of pupils reporting never or hardly ever being bullied**X****%**

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

There is now a system in place to notify promptly the National Care Standards Commission of events detailed in NMS 7.2 and 7.6.

Notifications have been made to the National Care Standards Commission office in Exeter. In the event of an incident, staff would contact the senior manager on call.

Incidents are recorded on incident reports.

Over 90% of parents who responded to the questionnaire survey said that staff are good at letting them know about things that happen with their child.

Evidence: parent questionnaire survey responses; pre-inspection questionnaire; discussion with principal and acting director of care; discussions with staff.

NUMBER OF THE FOLLOWING NOTIFIED TO NCSC DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS:

- **conduct by member of staff indicating unsuitability to work with children**
- **serious harm to a child**
- **serious illness or accident of a child**
- **serious incident requiring police to be called**

0

0

2

0

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.9) The school takes steps to ensure that children who are absent from the school without consent are protected in line with written policy and guidance.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There are policies in place which detail what actions are to be followed if a young person is absent without authority. These are covered in the absence policy, child protection and behaviour management policies. Staff would inform the senior manager on-call if a child young person were thought to be absent without consent. The senior manager on-call would be responsible for ensuring that a systematic search of the buildings and grounds was undertaken and parents and the Police contacted if the student was not found to be on-site. Staff spoken to were fully aware of senior staff on-call arrangements, and who to contact if a young person were to go missing.</p> <p>Any incident would be recorded in the boarding house records and on the young person's individual file.</p> <p>In St. David's House, because of the complex needs of the children and young people, additional security locks are placed on external doors. Some bedroom doors are of a "stable-door" design, in order to provide some additional security, by keeping the lower half of the door closed – the use of these doors has been reviewed and they are only used where a need has been clearly identified on the care plan and use of this type of door has been agreed.</p> <p>Evidence: discussion with acting director of care, pre-inspection questionnaire, discussions with staff, observation, policies and procedures, young person's files.</p>		
Number of recorded incidents of a child running away from the school over the past 12 months:		0

CARE AND CONTROL

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect.
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

Relationships between staff and children are based on mutual respect and understanding and clear professional and personal boundaries which are effective for both the individuals and the group.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>The inspectors observed that all staff related to the children and young people in a calm, caring and professional manner, listening positively to what the children and young people wanted to say. The inspectors observed that the children and young people were relaxed and relating well and easily to staff and one another. Staff encouraged children and young people to be inclusive and respectful to one another.</p> <p>The inspectors observed that there is an open and nurturing environment throughout the school where everyone, staff and students, are respected as individuals, valued and included. Excellent communication and partnership with parents is maintained.</p> <p>The parents' questionnaire survey responses showed that parents feel that all staff are very supportive and caring in their relationships with the children and young people and that their child's needs are well understood and met and that socially, as well as educationally, their child is making good progress at the school.</p> <p>There is written guidance and training for staff in direct contact with children and young people in positive care and control of children and young people including giving praise for achievements.</p> <p>The pupil questionnaire responses show that students feel that the school is a good place to live.</p> <p>Evidence: observation; discussions with young people; discussions with the principal, senior managers and staff; policies and procedures, questionnaire survey responses.</p>		

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.26)

Staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour, and where the behaviour of children is regarded as unacceptable by staff, it is responded to by constructive disciplinary measures which are approved by the Head of Care.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The inspectors saw the school's written behaviour management policy. This includes the six stages for dealing with unacceptable behaviour, guidance to staff on recognising and rewarding desired behaviour and prohibited sanctions. Discussions with staff and responses in the staff survey questionnaires confirmed that staff are aware of the school's policy on behaviour management and the use of positive interventions.

Records maintained in each of the boarding houses showed that no inappropriate sanction has been imposed. Responses in the pupil and staff survey questionnaires confirmed that any sanctions used are line with the school's behaviour management policy. Responses in the pupil survey showed that young people generally feel that staff are fair when sanctions are used and that staff discuss behaviour and sanctions used with young people.

The use of sanctions is regularly reviewed by senior managers and visiting governors.

Staff receive training in the use of control and restraint techniques. Control and restraint techniques are rarely used - all such incidents are recorded in individual files, and records kept in the separate departments. The system of recording used was well maintained, and worked well on a multi- disciplinary campus. As good practice, control and restraint training should be accompanied by training in gentle teaching, etc.

The school does not use any form of prefect system.

81% of parents, who responded to the parent questionnaire survey, said that the school has told them about its rules. In general, parents felt that these were fair. Parents were less clear about what sanctions or punishments the school may use – a third of parents who replied to the parent questionnaire survey said that the school had not told them about what punishments it uses. Parents who said they had been told felt the punishments used were acceptable and fair.

Evidence: policies and procedures, pre-inspection questionnaire, discussions with staff and young people, records, questionnaire survey responses.

QUALITY OF CARE

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes.
- The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school.
- Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within school and in the local community.
- Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted.
- Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.
- Children 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.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.6)

Admission and leaving processes are planned and agreed with the child – and as appropriate, with parents and carers and placing authorities – as far as possible and handled with sensitivity and care by those concerned.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

A full multi-disciplinary assessment of the child's or young person's needs is undertaken during a lengthy visit where the child/young person and parents or carer stays at the school. Following this, a recommendation is made and a placement at the school is offered if the school can meet the child's or young person's needs. Key staff visit the child and parent at home to ensure that the admission is as well planned as possible. The school then has excellent information about the child's or young person's needs prior to admission. Each young person who boards is allocated a key worker. This is decided on an individual basis, to suit the young person.

The school does not take emergency admissions.

For young people progressing from the main school to the college or perhaps to other further education establishments or planning to leave full-time education, a transition plan is drawn up and executed. Young people were aware of these plans and confirmed that they had been involved in the planning process. The school liaises with other agencies, particularly the Connexions advisors in the student's home area and with social workers and other professionals for young people leaving care.

The inspectors had evidence of the assessment and planning process in action in relation to some young people who may be transferring to the West of England School when their current RNIB school closes.

Staff feel that the school maintains very good relationships with other professionals. Good communication is maintained with parents.

Evidence: policies and procedures, pre-inspection questionnaire, discussions with senior managers, staff and students, survey questionnaire responses.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.7)

Care staff and the school's residential provision and activities actively contribute to individual children's educational progress, and care staff actively support children's education, ensuring regular attendance, punctuality and a minimum of interruption during the school day.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

All students have a statement of special educational needs and individual education plans, which are reviewed annually. Targets for each young person to work towards are agreed at annual reviews.

There are daily handover sessions between the teaching staff and the care staff, attended by the acting head of care for care staff to inform teaching staff of any information which will assist in supporting the child or young person in school time. There are regular meetings between tutors and key workers. There is evidence of close, effective liaison and communication between the two groups of staff.

Both care and teaching staff assist young people in their preparation for independent living through the individual "living skills" programmes.

Formal homework (prep) sessions take place after school and the library and IT facilities are available to young people outside of school hours.

Parents view the education and living skills provided by the school as one of the best features of the school.

Evidence: young person's files, discussions with care and teaching staff, discussions with students, discussions with senior managers, observation, survey questionnaire responses.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.9)

Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The school provides an excellent variety of sporting and social activities for children and young people - such as swimming (the school has its own swimming pool on-site), skiing, Tae Kwon Do, trampolining, walking, drama, PHAB club, scouts, bowling, cinema and theatre outings, shopping trips, craft activities and karaoke. This is not an exhaustive list by any means. The school has its own power boat (with suitably trained staff), which is used for river outings during warmer months. The school's own radio station, which involves the whole school, began live broadcasting in May 2003 - a very impressive achievement which obviously gives great enjoyment and entertainment to the students and fosters an excellent sense of community within the school. Two college students invited the inspectors to observe their live broadcasting session in the evening, when phone-in requests were taken from students around the school. The school radio service is obviously a popular addition to the range of activities the school offers the students.

During one of the evenings of the inspection visit, students in main school and St David's House had a choice of on-site activities of attending a "Really Wild" session with hands-on contact with a bird eating spider, reptiles and cockatoo or a story telling session. Both these sessions were very enjoyable for the children. Other children took part in off-site activities also.

The inspectors also observed a meeting at the college where a range of activities were being planned for the coming weekend – these included a canoeing trip to Dartmoor, plans to watch the forthcoming rugby match on television and other activities.

Discussion with students and questionnaire survey responses confirmed that staff consult with children and young people about the activities they would like to do in the evenings and weekends and include these requests as far as possible in planned activities.

Staff are to be commended for their vision and dedication in instigating and supporting such excellent opportunities for students to try out new experiences and develop new skills.

A number of parents commented that the variety of activities available to their child within the school and local community was one of the best things about the school.

Evidence: observation, discussions with staff and young people, questionnaire survey responses.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.25)

The school actively promotes the health care of each child and meets any intimate care needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The nurse inspector spoke with five nurses and the senior school nurse. Nursing staff (both day and night staff) are currently developing care plans for children's more physical needs, based on the "Activities of Daily Living" model. It is aimed to complete these by September 2004, followed by termly reviews. The intention is to 'dovetail' these with plans drawn up by other staff teams at the school. There are good links with the children's GPs, providing necessary support for nursing staff. A psychologist visits the school regularly.

There was clear evidence, in documentation, of relevant health checks, both routine and as required. Staff were very aware (and acted accordingly) of the need to obtain parental consent.

Staff said children could request to see a same-gender doctor, or see them alone. They

were clear that children could decline treatment - although they would take various factors into account (including age), try to ascertain reasons for refusal, and consult/inform relatives. One child's refusal was seen recorded in care documentation. Older students can make arrangements independently to visit GPs off the campus, if they wish.

There were first aid boxes around the campus (including on transport and in kitchens). There was no established system for regular checking of contents of the various first aid boxes. The principal agreed to look into this. It was expected that all nurses undertook the First Aid at Work course. This is a commendable policy.

A list of up-to-date personal identity numbers (PINs) for qualified nursing staff was seen - information is gained from Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) documentation brought in by nursing staff. Senior staff confirmed that the NMC are contacted to verify the current registration of new staff, keeping relevant evidence in the administration office.

Practice had been reviewed since the last inspection, to ensure medication is only given to the child for whom it is prescribed.

The system for administering medication around the campus was discussed with staff in relation to safe systems. The NCSC pharmacist inspector has advised obtaining a lockable version of the box currently used, so that all reasonable security measures have been taken. Individual children carry some medication, with individual protocols/instructions written by medical staff. There is no system for ensuring all were reviewed (and updated as necessary) at least yearly, (although many had been). The pharmacist inspector advises such medications should be recorded on return to the boarding houses at the end of the day, to ensure appropriate monitoring of stock.

The inspector was informed that cupboards to store controlled drugs that conform to relevant legislation have been ordered. The pharmacist inspector advises that controlled drug records should be kept in a bound book, or numbered record sheets dated and named for the individual child, to provide an auditable system.

Staff, when asked, were aware of various medication issues or procedures, including refusal of medication. But the written medication policy was not comprehensive – this is particularly important where care staff are also involved in administration. The guidance should be updated to include keeping signatures of administering staff, refusal of medication, action to be taken in the event of an administration error and (risk) assessment procedures for students wishing to self-administer.

No such protocol for 'homely remedies' or over-the-counter medications is available, although parental consent was obtained. Nor was there a written procedure for self-administration. The senior nurse said students' bedrooms had lockable facilities and she was not aware of any issues. Initial (risk) assessments should be regularly reviewed, including compliance with storage procedures.

Records were seen of medication, treatment and first aid given to children. Individual accident forms are used, completed by a witness to the event whenever possible. This information is copied to a number of relevant others and the 'witness' is asked to inform the next-of-kin, to ensure good communication on the accident. Illnesses were seen recorded in care documentation.

The inspector suggested any written authorisation of the prescribing doctor or the responsible nurse should be reviewed at least yearly.

Therapists are responsible for instructions for equipment. Regular recorded updates should be given on these procedures to include assessment of competency; staff should sign training records to confirm they feel competent. After consultation with the pharmacist inspector, a recommendation is being made that an anatomical training aid be obtained for training on Stesolid administration, as used elsewhere. Senior staff should ensure that administering staff are fully aware of the particular needs of any one individual they may

treat, recording names of children whom they are authorised to administer to. This should prompt reviews when new children attend the school.

As good practice, a pharmacist or another external agent such as a College of Further Education should give medication training and updates. Some of the nurses were undertaking such a course. Senior staff said care staff would be able to do the same in time - the senior nurse trains them presently.

At present, electric plug-in monitoring devices are used in the sick bay for children to summon help, and elsewhere for children under special observation. The school is researching other monitoring means. There are call bell systems in the boarding houses.

Evidence: discussions with senior management, nursing and care staff, tour of premises, young person's files, medication administration and accident records, observation, policies and procedures.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.15)

Children are provided with adequate quantities of suitably prepared wholesome and nutritious food, having regard to their needs and wishes, and have the opportunity to learn to prepare their own meals. Where appropriate special dietary needs due to health, religious persuasion, racial origin or cultural background are met, including the choice of a vegetarian meal for children who wish it.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The main school, college and St David's House have their own dining rooms and kitchen facilities. Some of the college students live in small groups with minimum staff supervision and are responsible for preparing their own meals. These students are provided with a fixed budget with which to buy their own shopping and make their own housekeeping arrangements, calling on staff for support as required. This is part of the preparation for independent living programmes offered to older students preparing to move on from college. A new catering manager has been appointed since the last inspection. He has undertaken a survey of students' preferences and has used this information to redesign the menus. The inspectors understood that termly meetings for students to give feedback on catering issues and menus are planned. The inspector was informed that catering staff also meet regularly with the head of care in each house to discuss individual dietary needs and preferences. Medical staff also gives advice on special dietary needs.

A new self-service salad bar with a wide variety of prepared salad options has also been introduced at lunch and evening meals in main school and the college.

Main school students take supper in their boarding houses.

St David's House has its own chef responsible for the complex diets for the young people living there. Each young person has a special diet programme. The chef has an excellent understanding of the specialist diets that needs to be prepared for these students.

Staff eat meals with the students to encourage socialising at mealtimes and give assistance as required.

The inspectors shared several meals with students in main school and college and observed meals being served in St David's House. The food served was plentiful, wholesome and well prepared and presented with a good range of choice available.

Discussions with main school and college students and pupil questionnaire responses showed that students are generally happy with the food at the school and in some cases were very complimentary about it.

The Environmental Health Officer has confirmed to the inspector that currently there are no outstanding food safety requirements for the school.

Evidence: observation, meals taken with students, discussions with the catering manager and other staff, discussions with students, minutes of catering meeting, pupil survey questionnaire responses, letter from the Environmental Health Officer.

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.7)

Children are provided for adequately on an individual basis and encouraged to exercise their own preferences in the choice of clothing and personal requisites. Children who require assistance to choose what they wear and/or how they spend their money are provided with the assistance they need, in a way which maximises their choice.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The inspectors observed that children and young people are able to bring their own clothing to school, have suitable space to store these and are able to exercise their own preferences in the choice of clothing outside of school time.

Staff provide assistance in purchasing personal requisites either as part of a group outing or on an individual basis where required.

The school has laundry facilities on site and there are individual washing machines and dryers available for students' use (mainly post 16).

Main school children and young people usually take personal washing home at weekends.

Pupil survey questionnaire responses and discussions with students confirmed that students are able to choose how to spend their own money.

Evidence: tour of premises; observation; pre-inspection questionnaire; discussions with students; discussions with staff, pupil survey questionnaire responses.

CARE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT PLAN

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school.
- Children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.
- In accordance with their wishes, children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while living away from home at school.
- Children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living.
- Children receive individual support when they need it.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.8)

There is a written placement plan specifying how the school will care for each boarding pupil in accordance with his or her assessed needs, the school cares for that child in accordance with that plan, monitors progress in relation to that plan, and updates that plan as necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Each child and young person has a written plan which identifies their needs and how the school will work to meet them. This information is included individual care, medical and/or therapeutic plans and the statement of special educational needs, which are reviewed at the annual review. Therapy programmes are reviewed half termly as well as at the annual review. The school also contributes to the statutory care review process for children and young people attending the school who are looked after by the local authority. Children and young people and their parents are invited to attend reviews. Individual support and guidance are provided by the young person's key worker and tutor who monitor the implementation of the placement plan. Young people attending the college also have Personal Development Plans. Parents are very satisfied with the way the school cares for their child.

Evidence: young person's files, discussion with acting director of care, discussions with teaching, care, medical and therapeutic staff, discussions with children and young people, pre-inspection questionnaire, pupil, staff and parent survey questionnaire responses.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.5)

Each child has a permanent private and secure record of their history and progress which can, in compliance with legal requirements for safeguards, be seen by the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

There are individual case files held for each student. The main file is kept securely in the main admin office. Other specialist files, for example, medical, therapy, education, and care are maintained, in locked offices, by each department.

In addition to this, each of the boarding houses keep diaries, log books and daily recordings. Those records were found to be up to date and accurately completed. Staff discuss entries made with children and young people.

The school has a policy regarding access to information which is made known to students and their parents.

All files are consolidated and archived in the school's administration department when a young person leaves the school.

Evidence: discussions with senior management, administrative and care staff, observation, file tracking.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.3)

The school maintains clear and accurate records on the staff and child groups of the school, and major events affecting the school and children resident there.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The school holds centrally, in the admin office, a register of children which holds all the information required under NMS 19.2.

In addition, an employees' register is held which shows, for staff employed by the school, the information required under Standard 19.2, except whether the employee is resident at the school. The inspector was told that only the principal resides on the school campus. The register of employees should also include details of agency staff and volunteers, which it does not currently do – this was discussed with the principal and acting director of care who agreed that this would be addressed.

Four staff personnel files were randomly selected for examination – some recently appointed and some longer serving members of staff. Two files did not contain a letter of application and one of these held no c.v. either. There was evidence that a process of identity and qualifications checks had been undertaken and references obtained. One file did not hold a copy of the contract of employment. The inspectors were informed by the principal that the personnel filing system has been reviewed over the past year. Reasons why documentation was not complete on the files chosen were discussed and the inspectors accepted that, in general, the system now in place is sufficient to meet the standard.

The accident logs were examined and found to be up-to-date.

A record of menus served for the past year is maintained.

Duty rosters showing staff actually working at the school both day and night are maintained.

A diary of events occurring at the school, including the names of visitors to the school and the reasons for their visits is maintained.

Records are kept securely in the main admin office and, where required, stored for at least five years from the date of the last entry.

Evidence: staff files, register of children, register of employees, accident logs, record of menus, discussion with administration staff, discussions with senior staff.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.6)

Subject to their wishes, children are positively encouraged and enabled by the school to maintain contact with their parents and other family members (unless there are welfare concerns) while living at school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

In main school and St David's House, the children and young people are weekly boarders, staying at the school Monday to Thursday evenings only. Post 16 students board at the weekends also. Students have access to telephones in each of the boarding houses; many have their own mobile phone.

Any restrictions on contact are as agreed in the placement plan and are recorded in individual files. Staff were aware of individual circumstances and discuss these with young people as necessary.

The school has an "open door" policy and very much welcomes visits by parents, members of the extended family and others significant to children and young people. Overnight accommodation, in a comfortable and "homely" flat, can be provided where necessary.

Responses in the parent survey questionnaires confirmed that parents feel they are encouraged to visit the school and that they can see their child in private when they visit. Parents said that staff are "very welcoming", "friendly" and hospitable during their visits to the school. Parents confirmed that staff keep in good contact with them about issues and concerns relating to their child.

Evidence: pre-inspection questionnaire, discussions with staff and students, observation, parent survey questionnaire responses.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.2)

Where a pupil is in care and will be leaving care on leaving the school, the school agrees with the young person's responsible authority what contribution it should make to implement any Pathway or other plan for the pupil before the pupil leaves school. These arrangements are in line with that young person's needs, and the school implements its contribution where feasible from at least a year before the pupil is expected to leave care or move to independent living. The school works with any Personal Advisor for the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The school maintains good contact with parents and other agencies for students who are leaving the school.

The school is pro-active in supporting young people to move on into the wider community and has developed close and effective links with other agencies, for example, local colleges, Connexions, housing associations and potential employers to assist with this.

There are personal development plans for college students to identify needs and ensure that the individual elements of support required are put into place. This includes identifying other agencies that may need to be involved where appropriate, for example, local social services as well as training and support for all aspects of daily living such as shopping, cooking, mobility, managing finances and benefits, health care, social contacts and accommodation. Young people are actively encouraged to participate in planning for their future.

In main school and St David's House, all young people have a transition plan, which identifies how their individual needs may best be met as they move from the main school to the college, or to other identified arrangements.

Practice in this area is commendable.

Evidence: discussion with the principal and head of care, pre-inspection questionnaire, transition planning policy, discussions with students, observation, file tracking.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.13)

All children are given individualised support in line with their needs and wishes, and children identified as having particular support needs, or particular problems, receive help, guidance and support when needed or requested.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

Children and young people are given a high level of individual support. Additional professional support is provided as identified in the care plan or annual review. Each child or young person who boards has an allocated key worker. All students also have an individual tutor. There is good liaison between these groups of staff. Discussion with children and young people confirmed they are able to talk to staff when they feel they need support. The school also employs a clinical psychologist who provides a counselling service in addition to the specialist medical and therapeutic services, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, music therapy, and mobility. Parents view the staff expertise and knowledge of visual impairment as one of the greatest features of the school. Many parents commented that the range of specialist services provided on site and the close collaboration between the different departments at the school ensures excellent holistic care and education is provided for their child. Parents commented very positively on the individualised and specialised support their child receives at the school.

Practice in this area is commendable.

Evidence: survey questionnaire responses, discussions with staff and students, young person's files, observation.

PREMISES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children live in well designed, pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.
- Children live in accommodation that is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.
- Children are able to carry out their ablutions in privacy and with dignity.
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The school is located, designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. It serves the needs of the children and provides the sort of environment most helpful to each child's development, and is sufficient for the number of children.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The West of England School and College is situated in a large, level campus, close to a main road and bus route into the city centre of Exeter.

Residential accommodation consists of five purpose built boarding houses - Dinham House and Richmond House, for main school male pupils; Haldon House, for female main school pupils; St. David's House, for pupils and students aged under 16 years who have more complex medical and other needs; and the College, for post 16 students. There are also separate therapy and medical centres, a day nursery and other educational facilities, reception and administration centre, main school dining and catering facility and support services on site. The college and St David's House have their own dining and catering facilities.

The school has extensive and attractive grounds with enclosed playgrounds equipped with fixed play equipment, a sensory garden area, running track and sports pitches and a swimming pool. The campus now has its own radio station operated by students.

The campus and buildings are maintained to a high level.

There is a programme of routine maintenance and development of the site, as well as a health and safety action plan. Adaptations to the grounds and premises have been made for wheelchair users to access all parts of the buildings and site they need to use, for example, external doors to boarding accommodation have been fitted with automatic doors to improve access for wheelchairs users. Since the last inspection, the ramp outside the main school dining room has been made safer by the addition of a guiding wall. External lighting has been improved also.

Following a recent site visit to Dinham, Richmond and Haldon Houses, the Fire Safety Officer noted a number of issues requiring attention relating to fire risk assessments and means of escape, which have been listed in a report dated 12 February 2004. The inspector has been given a copy of the action plan with timescales drawn up by the school to comply with fire safety regulations. The inspectors were told that the fire risk assessment is currently being reviewed.

Evidence: letter from fire safety officer and school's action plan, discussion with the principal and acting director of care, tour of premises.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.19)

The school provides adequate good quality and well-maintained accommodation for boarding pupils, which is consistent with their needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The boarding accommodation is well maintained and decorated to a good standard. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms, if they wish.

Main school boarding accommodation has been enhanced by a programme of redecoration and replacement of some bedroom carpets/flooring since the last inspection.

The accommodation in the college is of a very high standard. This included the communal living areas and the flats in which small groups of young people are able to live with limited staff support, to enable the development of more independence skills. College students have their own study/bedroom.

In the main school boarding units and St David's House most bedrooms are shared (usually double rooms). A few rooms have three beds but these are usually only used by occasional boarders. Where bedrooms are shared, children and young people are consulted about whom they would like to share with. In the pupil questionnaire responses, and in discussions with the inspector, some pupils said that they very much enjoyed sharing a bedroom with a friend.

Bedrooms were seen to have sufficient and suitable furniture, fittings and heating. All bedrooms have windows for ventilation and natural light.

Where needed, the school provides appropriate specialist equipment. St. David's House has a high standard of accommodation, with specialist equipment installed to meet the complex needs of the children.

All boarding houses have wheel chair access to downstairs areas. A new ramped area has been installed at Dinham House.

Evidence: tour of the premises, discussion with the acting director of care, discussions with care staff and with young people, pre-inspection questionnaire.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.7)

The school has sufficient baths, showers and toilets, all of good standard and suitable to meet the needs of the children. The school has appropriate changing and washing facilities for incontinent children where necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The school has sufficient baths, showers and toilets for both students and staff.

There is a planned programme of refurbishment and improvement of toilet and bathing facilities in main school boarding accommodation in progress. This includes improving facilities for disabled users.

In both the male and female main school boarding houses there is one shower/toilet room which does not have a lockable door. The toilet stall within these shower rooms, do have lockable doors and a curtain across the shower stall is used to maintain privacy in the shower. However, as the corridor door cannot be secured, privacy when undressing and dressing is compromised. This was discussed with staff and a suitable means to improve privacy will be introduced.

Evidence: tour of the premises, discussion with care staff and young people, pre-inspection questionnaire.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.10)

Positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards, in accordance with Health and Safety and Fire legislation and guidance.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

During office hours, all visitors are required to sign in and wear badges. Outside of office hours, visitors sign in at the boarding house they are visiting.

One parent expressed a concern, in their parent survey questionnaire, about access the main college block, particularly at weekends, reporting that they had entered the building with their child and gone to their bedroom without staff being aware that they were there. This was discussed with senior managers at the college who said that the security measures would be reviewed as a matter of priority. However, during the course of the inspection, the security measures in place were sufficient to deal with an incident of a potential intruder on the site. Staff vigilance identified the potential situation very quickly and immediate measures were instigated to investigate and deal with the situation.

The inspector found that some fire doors in the medical block were being held open by inappropriate means. The acting director of care said more appropriate devices were on order for some areas, and she would investigate which other areas required these.

The head of nursing said nursing staff were not involved in carrying out risk assessments. None were seen with care notes held at the medical centre. The nurse inspector felt nursing staff should record risk assessments in relation to health needs or problems.

The inspector felt that the hot water to the bath in the sick bay area was too hot, although the head of nursing thought control devices had been fitted to the supply. There was no thermometer available to check the temperature – it is recommended one be obtained. (See “Scalding Risks From Hot Water In Health And Social Care” Local Authority Circular Number: 79/5 www.hse.gov.uk/lau/lacs/79-5.) The basins in the two bedrooms had very little flow from the hot taps. Senior staff agreed to get this checked by maintenance staff.

Staff confirmed that they have received training in fire procedures and that regular fire drills are undertaken.

Evidence: observation, survey questionnaire responses, discussions with head of nursing and other nursing staff, discussions with senior managers and care staff.

STAFFING

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- There are careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.9)

Recruitment of all staff (including ancillary staff and those employed on a contractual/sessional basis) and volunteers who work with the children in the school includes checks through the Criminal Records Bureau checking system (at Standard or Enhanced level as appropriate to their role in the school), with a satisfactory outcome. There is a satisfactory recruitment process recorded in writing.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school recruitment process is set out in the staff recruitment and selection guidelines policy document. Vacancies are advertised internally and externally through the job centre, local and national newspapers and professional journals. Discussions with staff confirmed the recruitment and selection process – where candidates are shortlisted from their submitted c.v. and letter of application and invited to visit the school before an interview is held. Staff confirmed to the inspectors that references are sought and that the school made enquiries of previous employers where working with children or vulnerable adults was involved.

Four staff files were checked. In two instances, these records did not meet NMS 27.2 – for example, one file did not contain an employment history and on another, there was no explanation of a gap in employment. The principal informed the inspectors that a task group has reviewed the recruitment and selection policy in the past year. The inspectors have been provided with a copy of this policy. The principal told the inspectors that employment gaps are thoroughly checked at interview or by himself, by way of reference concerns, without exception, and any relevant comments are written on the applicant's CV.

In the exceptional cases, where a member of staff begins employment before the Criminal Records Bureau check has been completed, the inspectors were told that staff are not allowed unsupervised access to children and young people until these checks are satisfactorily completed.

Evidence: staff recruitment and selection guidelines, discussions with care staff, discussions with senior management, staff file checks.

Total number of care staff:	48	Number of care staff who left in last 12 months:	9
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Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.13)

The school is staffed at all times of the day and night, at or above the minimum level specified under standard 28.2. Records of staff actually working in the school demonstrate achievement of this staffing level.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Observation, staff rotas and discussions with staff confirmed that adequate staffing numbers are maintained. The school employs relief staff to cover where required for permanent/contracted staff. Agency staff are sometimes used, also. Staffing ratios are increased on the identification of specific needs for individual children – this was much in evidence during the inspection visit.

Nursing cover is available 24 hours on site, Mondays to Fridays, with nursing staff on call service at weekends. There is waking night nursing cover in St David's House. An additional half-time nursing post has been added to the nursing staff cover, since the last inspection, following a review of cover by one of the trustees.

The principal or a senior manager is on call each night.

There are waking night staff in St David's House, the college and Haldon House at present and staff sleeping-in in boarding houses where there is no waking night cover.

Overwhelmingly, parents who responded to the parent questionnaire survey agreed that they think there are enough staff at the school to care for their child.

Evidence: pre-inspection questionnaire, care staffing policy, observation, questionnaire survey responses, staffing rota, discussion with senior management, discussions with staff.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.6)

Staff receive training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Staff view the training they have received as very useful in equipping them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the school. Discussions with staff confirmed the induction process and training for care and ancillary staff. Staff have access to relevant policies and procedures. In discussion, staff confirmed that they have a personal development plan.

Staff said that, in the past twelve months, they have received in-house training in child protection, epilepsy management, bullying awareness, behaviour management and restraint, manual handling, medication procedures and external courses such as NVQ Levels 2, 3 & 4 in caring for children and young people, Assessors course D32/33, First Aid at work, specialist courses in the care and support of people with visual impairment, epilepsy and Batten's disease conferences and NCC supervisory development course.

Training on keyworking from the Social Care Association is planned for September 2004.

There are four main development days for all staff.

Parents feel that staff are very caring and professional and look after their child very well.

Evidence: discussions with staff and senior management, policies and procedures, staff and parent survey questionnaire responses.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.13)

All staff, including domestic staff and the Head of the school, are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The school has clear management structures in place. Staff spoken to were well aware of that structure and to whom they are accountable.

The principal has an annual appraisal involving an external assessor and a sub group of governors with performance targets for the year set which are reviewed six monthly.

All staff have a job description and undergo an induction training programme and probationary period. All staff receive supervision and have an annual appraisal.

Staff are given practice handbooks and access to and training on the school's policies and procedures.

Staff questionnaire survey responses and discussions with staff indicated that staff are aware of key policies and procedures – examples given included child protection, confidentiality, fire procedures, behaviour policy, complaints policy and procedure. Staff questionnaire survey responses and interviews with staff confirmed that staff receive supervision and appraisals. Care staff weekly meetings were also seen as supportive. Staff also said that information systems are good.

Evidence: pre-inspection questionnaire, discussions with senior management and staff, policies and procedures, staff survey questionnaire responses.

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.
- Children enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.17)

The school is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school is well managed and organised with a clear management structure which provides excellent leadership and support to staff and students. The senior management team, care teams and other professional staff groups meet regularly to ensure that good interdepartmental communication is maintained so that individual needs are recognised and met.

The school has now arranged for Penwith College in Cornwall to provide a distance-learning course for care staff to undertake NVQ levels 2 and 3 in caring for children and young people. This training is supported by fortnightly visits to the school by two tutors for face-to-face meetings with trainees. The inspectors were told that it is hoped that two members of staff will be undertaking NVQ Level 4 and one the assessors' course.

The acting director of care holds relevant professional qualifications in social care and the support and care of people with visual impairment.

Staff rotas have time scheduled to ensure that staff supervisions, handover sessions and meetings, record keeping, planning, implementing and reviewing care programmes and spending time interacting with individual children occur without compromising overall care of children.

Parents overwhelmingly agreed that staff do a good job of caring for their child. Parents have a high regard for the way in which the school is organised, managed and staffed. The majority who responded to the parent questionnaire survey said that they felt that the staff were excellent and should be commended for the high standard of care and education that is provided.

Evidence: pre-inspection questionnaire, discussions with senior management and staff, questionnaire survey responses, observation.

Percentage of care staff with relevant NVQ or equivalent child care qualification:

X

%

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.5)

The National Care Standards Commission is informed within 24 hours if a receiver, liquidator or trustee in bankruptcy becomes responsible for the school. Such persons on becoming responsible for the school have ensured that the school continues to be managed on a day to day basis by a Head who meets recruitment and qualification requirements for a Head under these Standards. Such a temporary Head must make sure that the operation of the school meets the requirements of these standards in relation to the day to day running of the school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school has a system in place to meet this standard.

The principal or senior members of staff, delegated by the head teacher to do so, monitor records to identify any patterns or issues requiring action, for example, records are kept of accidents and near misses involving students and members of staff. The principal and senior management check the records to identify any particular patterns or problem areas for which a particular risk management strategy might be needed.

The principal reports to the governing body on the overall monitoring of the management of the school.

Evidence: discussions with the principal and senior managers; pre-inspection questionnaire; record checks.

Standard 33 (33.1 - 33.7)

The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body receive a written report on the conduct of the school from a person visiting the school on their behalf every half term.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Members of the governing body undertake these visits on a half termly basis and produce a written report on the conduct of the school. The visits include checks on the school's record of complaints, sanctions and use of physical interventions, and assessment of the physical condition of the buildings, furniture and equipment of the school and provide opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to, to meet the visitor(s).

Copies of previous inspection reports were made available to the inspectors.

Evidence: pre-inspection questionnaire, governors' inspection reports.

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)****Lay Assessor**

Signature

Date

PART D

HEAD'S RESPONSE

D.1 Head's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 16th March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Thank you for the copy of the draft response dated the 27th May 2004 following the inspection that concluded on the 16th March 2004.

I have decided to comment on the two Standards assessed as grade 2 – standards almost met (minor shortfalls).

Standard 14 (14.1 – 14.25)

The response to these issues raised will be addressed in the Action Plan.

Standard 26 (26.1 – 26.10)

We accept a planned response is required to these practical issues and this is addressed in the Action Plan.

The report has been checked for accuracy and no amendments are recommended.

The inspection team carried out their work in a well planned, competent and staff sensitive manner and discussions with all members of staff were undertaken professionally.

A copy of the Action Plan is attached.

Action taken by the NCSC in response to Head's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Head's comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

Head's comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

NO

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 24th June 2004 which indicates how recommended actions and advisory recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Head's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

D.3 HEAD'S AGREEMENT

Head's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I, Paul Holland, of The West of England School And College for young people with little or no sight confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above dates and that I agree with the recommended actions made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name	<u>PAUL HOLLAND</u>
Signature	<u>Paul Holland</u>
Designation	<u>Principal</u>
Date	17 June 2004

Or

D.3.2 I, _____ of West of England School for children with little or no sight am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

[illegible]

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.