



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Residential Special School

RNIB New College

RNIB New College Worcester

Whittington Road

Worcester

WR5 2JU

23rd to 27th June 2003

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

RNIB New College

Tel No:

01905 763933

AddressRNIB New College Worcester, Whittington Road, Worcester,
WR5 2JX**Fax No:**

01905 763277

Email Address:**Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school**

Royal National Institute of the Blind

Name of Head

Mr N A Ratcliffe

NCSC Classification

Residential Special School

Type of schoolCo-educational
secondary boarding
school, for children with
visual impairment and,
sometimes, additional
disabilities, able to study
beyond 16.**Date of last boarding welfare inspection:**

21.05.01

Date of Inspection Visit		23 rd to 27 th June 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of NCSC Inspector	1	S Moodie	073081
Name of NCSC Inspector	2	J Morgan	
Name of NCSC Inspector	3	S Woodget	
Name of NCSC Inspector	4	M Ross	
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			

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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 RNIB New College

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

RNIB New College Worcester is a co-educational boarding special school for young people from 11 to 19 years of age, with impaired vision, who are able to follow courses leading to GCSE and to pursue study beyond 16. Students enter primarily in year 7 and year 12 but also join the school at different times during other school years. It is set at the edge of Worcester. The campus is pleasantly landscaped and surrounded by open fields at the back.

Those below the sixth form board in four different houses, of 12 to 15 students, each run by a house parent with a deputy and assistant house parent. Residential staff there are directly responsible to the Head of Care. Two of the houses are mixed, one is for girls only the other is only for boys. Each house accommodates a wide age range, with pupils from year 7 to year 11.

Sixth formers live in the sixth form hostel and the sixth form house. The residential care tutors there, under a senior residential care tutor, are responsible to the manager of the sixth form accommodation. He is also Deputy Head of Care and manages and supports the GAP year students who are recruited to the school usually from the commonwealth. They have accommodation in the houses and hostel and contribute 18 hours a week work in each.

The Head of Care is a member of the college's senior management team and is directly responsible to the Principal.

The young people come to be students at the college from a number of different local authority areas. Some have had to wait a considerable time to be admitted because of funding difficulties. They do not necessarily come from families with a boarding tradition. All have visual impairment; some are totally blind. Some have additional disabilities.

The Principal and Head of Care undertook extensive preparation for this inspection and the inspectors wish to extend their thanks for that preparation and for the positive and helpful response from all of the staff and students during the event.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

RNIB New College has:

- created some good guidance for staff on anti-bullying, being absent without consent, on the use of disciplinary measures
- initiated a series of regional meetings with parents, that provided more consultation, opportunities to hear from education, daily living skills and residential staff, with a governor attending when possible, and a chance for parents to offer support to one another
- placed emphasis on assessing children's suitability prior to entry
- structured the assessment process so that children gain an introduction to boarding at the college
- integrated care and education more effectively through using the pastoral team leaders to liaise formally with the care staff about children's welfare and education
- started the process of creating a manual on independence and daily living skills for the school and parents through using the experience and resources of both teaching and care staff in a joint working party
- continued to ensure that students have opportunities to gain individualised care from a broad range of staff including the two counsellors
- provided good opportunities for students to learn to cook from early in their school careers
- developed opportunities for students to gain independence skills alongside providing them with good education
- enabled most students to leave for tertiary education with a view to gaining good career opportunities
- instituted a structure which enables the Principal and senior management team, including the Head of Care, to monitor effectively the life of the school and make changes when necessary
- formulated a useful structure for the residential management of the college
- enabled students to consider that, for the most part, they experienced a fair system of control

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

RNIB New College should:

- develop further the work already in place to take account of student's religious, racial and cultural backgrounds
- enable students to gain more knowledge of and confidence in the complaints procedure
- provide care staff with opportunities to explore when and why they may act inconsistently as teams and then develop a more whole team approach
- assist student's understanding of the need for different approaches in different care and disciplinary contexts
- engage students in the creation of their targets which are pursued within the boarding accommodation with staff, in line with those from their reviews
- increase the privacy of all of the telephones in the houses
- make sure that the system for reporting and repairing minor damage in students' bedrooms is effective
- continue to find ways to prevent students of very different age ranges from sharing bedrooms
- continue to develop the practice of supervision and support to enhance staff's practice and assist in meeting anxiety
- monitor the staffing levels at the weekends to identify whether there are difficult periods which may not deliver the best care to the students

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

There were some small shortfalls in guidance that have prevented some of the Standards from being fully met. There is much good guidance written already and this should be easily remedied. It is important to ensure that all relevant parties have copies.

The more complex tasks indicated above will need a set of strategies to meet them.

The college has to meet a broad spread of dependency. Its residential structure, which moves students from small, homely, residential settings to the greater independence of the sixth form provision, has to continue to meet similar ranges of dependence as students enter the college at different times. This requires a challenging range of skills to identify how light a touch there should be and what the impact of different decisions will be on the whole group. Generally the college meets this challenge very well.

The college is fortunate in having a very committed team of residential care staff. They have gained from the specialised training in helping young people to acquire the independence skills necessary to them. Staff will also gain from further training to help them handle students' additional disabilities, in line with the college's broadened statement of purpose, with the same level of confidence. The dedication and hard work of the management and staff at the college is to be commended.

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	
1	RS3 RS 3.2	The college should provide procedural guidelines to staff on privacy and confidentiality, covering: practical details about the way, and when, students' rooms, bathrooms and toilets are entered showering and bathing arrangements and the use of toilets personal matters such as menstruation.	
2	RS3 RS 3.1	Staff should maintain students' rights to confidentiality.	
3	RS3RS 3.5	The college should increase the sound proofing of the house telephones.	
4	RS4 RS 4.3	The college's complaints procedure should: preclude any person who is the subject of a formal complaint from taking any responsibility for the consideration or response to that complaint provide appropriately for the handling of any complaint made against the Principal of the college.	
5	RS4 RS 4.4	Staff should receive training in the complaints procedures covering all of the points in 4.4.	
6	RS5 RS 5.4	The college's child protection procedure should include the missing point in Appendix 1.	

7	RS6 RS 6.2	The anti-bullying policy should include within its definition of bullying the possibility that children may be bullied outside the school, or by visitors.	
8	RS6 RS 6.2	Staff should receive further training in awareness of and effective strategies to counter bullying.	
9	RS6 RS 6.3	The college should ensure that the anti-bullying policy is always available to staff, students and their parents. (RS 31.10)	
10	RS7 RS 7	The college should have a system which outlines who will notify the relevant bodies for all of the issues referred to in 7.2; and of serious concerns about the emotional or mental health of a child needing a mental health assessment (7.5).	
11	RS8 RS 8.2	Children and their parents should know the written procedures on action to be taken when a student is absent without authority.	
12	RS14RS 14.3	The college should ensure that those staff who have to implement specialised treatments continue to develop confidence in this, through further training or additional support.	
13	RS14RS 14.15	Two staff should sign to agree that, when the dosette box has to be used, the correct medication has been placed into the dosette box, with a list of the correct dose given to the house staff for them to check.	
14	RS14RS 14.16	All unused medication should be returned to the pharmacy for disposal. Keys for medicine cabinets should be restricted to authorised staff only. Lockable containers should be used for storage of medicines in the refrigerator.	
15	RS14RS 14.17	The medicine policy should be reviewed every two years, and should include details on how medicines are obtained stored and recorded. It should include the action to be taken if an administration error is made.	
16	RS14RS 14.19	The college should have a policy to have a spare key for those students who self medicate and keep their medicines locked in their own rooms.	
17	RS14RS 14.20	The pharmacy inspector has recommended that allergies and date of birth should be recorded on each student's Medication Administration Chart.	
18	RS17RS 17.2	A written plan or set of targets should be drawn up with each student on entry to the sixth form.	

19	RS17RS 17.4	Students in the sixth form should have an opportunity to have their wishes taken into account in the selection of their key workers.	
20	RS18RS 18.1	Students should be made aware that, in compliance with legal requirements for safeguards, they can see or be informed of the records of their history and progress.	
21	RS19RS 19.2	House staff should ensure that there is a full record of meals prepared for students to be held for a year.	
22	RS24RS 24.1	Damage to furniture in students' bedrooms should be repaired promptly	
23	RS24RS 24.6	Students should not share bedrooms with children of significantly different age, generally, of over two years older.	
24	RS25RS 25.1	Decoration and maintenance of toilets and bathrooms should be maintained frequently.	
25	RS27RS 27.2	The vetting of new staff should include all of the points in 27.2.	
26	RS27RS 27.8	A process will need to be developed to ensure that there is a record that each new staff member's full CRB Disclosure Record has been seen by an NCSC or CSCI inspector before it is destroyed.	
26	RS30RS 30.4	Supervision of residential staff should address all of the issues outlined in 30.4.	
27	RS31RS 31.10	The school should provide information to parents which includes all of the elements within 31.10.	

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*	Recommendations
1	RS1 RS 1.6	The college is advised to address the anxieties expressed by both students and residential staff as a consequences of broadening the range of special needs within the school.

2	RS2 RS 2.1	The college is advised to develop further the frequency of giving feedback to students to increase their confidence in the effectiveness of consultation.
3	RS3 RS 3	The college needed to emphasise to students that CCTV monitoring was to secure their safety not to intrude on their privacy.
4	RS9 RS 9.2	The college is advised to encourage staff to ensure that both they and the students understand and negotiate the levels of control and expectations of behaviour which are in the interests of the student's welfare and protection of others.
5	RS14RS 14.4	The college is advised to explore whether there could be links between the Personal, Social and Health Education Programmes and care staff to develop skills in talking with students about sex and health.
6	RS17RS 17.7	Where feasible the students should have a copy of their placement plan or targets in whatever format suits their skills.
7	RS23RS 23.7	The college is advised to include information about the use of CCTV, for security purposes only, within the Statement of Purpose.
8	RS28RS 28.3	The college is advised to monitor the level of staff at the weekends especially and note whether there is a relationship between staff levels and the stress or anxiety which some staff express.
9	RS32RS.3 2.2	The college is advised to set out formally who in the senior management team monitors which activities (set out in 32.2), how frequently and who would take what action if adverse trends or patterns were to emerge.

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	NO
• Fire Service	NO
• Environmental Health	NO
• DfES	NO
• School Doctor	NO
• Independent Person	NO
• Chair of Governors	NO

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)	YES
Answer-phone line for pupil/staff comments	NO

Date of Inspection	23/06/03
Time of Inspection	9.0 AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs.)	112.00
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	15

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?****3**

The Statement of Purpose, though brief, covered the topics required by the Standards. It was amplified by information within the prospectus.

The most recent version of the statement was available within the house for discussion by both staff and students. Students indicated that they were aware of changes.

There was information for children and parents in a starter pack. Parents confirmed that that they were given written information about the school which told them what they needed to know. Inspectors did not know whether there were taped versions available for younger children but heard of a video which one young student had watched with parents.

The most recent statement had extended the range of special needs that the college would accommodate. The college was aware that these needs could be effectively met only with full information when a student was first considered for admission. Some shortcomings in information provided had led to difficulties for some students; that had since been addressed.

The inspectors found no conflicts between the statement and the practice observed, and no inherent conflicts between the teaching and care functions of the school. They were aware, however, of anxiety expressed by some members of the care teams about the health aspects of their work and of demands on them to manage increasingly complex behaviours.

Similar anxieties were also expressed by a few parents and a small number of students. They feared that broadening range of needs that the college might meet would adversely affect their experiences of living there or might not meet the specialised needs of the students concerned.

The college is advised to ensure that the anxieties of all groups are acknowledged and addressed effectively.

The statement is approved each autumn by the governing body.

This Standard has been met.

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
<p>The college had a number of ways to seek students' views. There were Sixth Form House meetings, informal discussions in other houses, and a School Council. Houseparents and residential tutors were well positioned to be responsive to students' comments about what they needed for daily living. Inspectors saw changes made in houses as a result, and heard that discussion on school food in the school council had lead to fewer complaints. The college's policy was to extend consultation with students further.</p> <p>Inspectors were pleased to hear of the development of consultation and information sharing with parents. This had been moved forward significantly by the introduction of regional parents meetings, lead by the Vice Principal. Staff gave presentations about different aspects of school life, were there to listen to parents' views and were responding particularly to the parents' wish to have more information about promoting daily living skills. This was a different exercise from the more student focussed parent teacher discussions and annual reviews.</p> <p>Two thirds of the parents who replied to this question in the parents' survey, 24 out of 36, said that staff asked for their opinions before they made key decisions about their child.</p> <p>The Senior Management Team were aware of the need to, and did, take the racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of families into account. The inspector was told that this was continuing to be developed.</p> <p>Students had a range of adults available to whom they could make their feelings and wishes known. Houseparents, Pastoral Team Leaders, form teachers and tutors were key figures. They could also speak to the college's Counsellors. Some students used particular members of staff to talk to.</p> <p>The college was taking active steps to maximise students' opportunities for independence, both at an individual level, and through the further promotion of independent living skills.</p>		

Inspectors were concerned that despite the college's evident work in developing opportunities to promote consultation with the students, some of the group discussions and responses to the questionnaires suggested a cynical response to this from a few of the students themselves. Inspectors were aware that some suggestions which students made needed protracted negotiation with other systems, both within and outside the college. The college is advised to develop further the effectiveness of feedback to students.

This standard was met.

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?

2

The college considered students' privacy was very important. Written guidance in different places covered most but not all of the points included in Standard 3.2. Missing were:

- practical details about the way, and when, children's rooms, bathroom and toilets are entered
- showering and bathing arrangements and use of toilets
- personal matters such as menstruation.

Staff understood the importance of confidentiality, but students' questionnaires suggested in a few cases that staff needed to be more aware of being overheard when discussing key issues. They should also let students know when they needed to pass information on to other staff team members, which a student may have regarded at the time as confidential.

In all of the junior houses students feared that they were overheard on the telephone. Some also raised the issue of the CCTV monitoring of the site. Although this was done as a safety measure because of intrusions and theft, some students needed further reassurance on this point.

Private space in the boarding houses was limited but additional space was available in the main school should parents wish to see their children at school privately. Because parents came to collect or return their children, this had not often been sought.

This Standard was largely met.

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?****2**

Students were not themselves always able to confirm that they knew how to complain although many stated that they would take a complaint to staff. The School Council and the Sixth Form Meeting did receive complaints and could refer them on. Discussion with staff revealed that there were opportunities for students' individual complaints to be forwarded to the staff best suited to deal with them. The college's complaints procedure was set out in a new document drawn up by the Head of Care, in a briefer form in the "Welcome to RNIB New College" document for parents of students new to the college. It was not displayed clearly in the houses or sixth form house or hostel. If this were done it might act as a reminder that there was a procedure.

The majority of parents who replied to the survey, 25, stated that they had had some information about how to make a complaint, although only 12 were aware that they could complain to the NCSC. 8 of the parent group said that they had made a complaint and 4 of them were not satisfied with how it had been resolved. The questionnaire did not ask when they had made the complaint and it is therefore not possible to relate that response to the statistics given by the college below.

The new Minimum Standards have extended the elements that should be included within the complaints procedure. The college should add the missing points from Standard 4.3, "that it would preclude any person complained about from taking any responsibility for the consideration or response to that complaint", that it "provides appropriately for the handling of any complaint against the Head of the school" and then ensure that the whole procedure is available to students and their parents. Staff also need to be familiar with it and should receive some formal introductory training in its application (4.4).

The new procedure should also insert the reference to the National Care Standards Commission (and its successor body) in information for students and for their parents. The Standards also require a school to notify the NCSC of any serious complaints against the school or the staff of the school.

There were no outstanding complaints brought to the inspector's attention about care. The college had received no complaints in the last 12 months.

This Standard has not yet been met.

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

0

Number of above complaints substantiated:

0

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 college's child protection procedure met the majority of the elements in Standard 5 but omitted one of the points in Appendix 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools;

- that there would be notification to the NCSC not only of the allegations or suspicions of abuse and of the initiation of child protection enquiries but of the outcome as well.

Guidance for staff included procedures to minimise the risks of an allegation against them by a "safe touching policy." This was based on the formal advice which a union or professional association would give in a day school setting. Many staff who spoke to the inspector about it found it inconsistent with the role which they played in the boarding school. They also considered that it overlooked the crucial role which touch played in meeting both the educational and emotional needs of children with limited or no sight. The inspector heard two children asking for a hug on different occasions. This was seen to happen. "Safe touching" should not be equated with "no touching".

The inspector was pleased to hear that this matter was being addressed.

This Standard was met.

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

1

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?****2**

The college's anti-bullying policy and procedures were good. They were detailed and appeared appropriate. They needed to include however a response to bullying if it occurred elsewhere than in school, bullying by visitors, an indication of risk assessments carried out on areas of higher risk, and that students themselves will be involved in any revision of the policies. The house handbooks needed to include all elements of the policies. The school should have ensured that parents also have copies of them in the most recent hand book and will include the omissions when it is next revised.

Some students reported that they were bullied less than they had been at their former schools. Nonetheless, students did report that some bullying took place. 14 out of the 50 students who completed questionnaires, (28%), made references to being bullied 'sometimes' (or in a very few cases 'most of the time'). It was usually verbal. This was confirmed in the notes of some students' records. It showed that staff did take action to address problems when they came to light. Comments from students suggested that not all problems did come to light or were minimised. Sometimes they feared that reporting it would make the situation worse. This suggested that staff needed further training in both the awareness of bullying and of effective strategies to counter it.

Inspectors considered that care should be taken to look at every suggestion of bullying and that information from other students should be sought whenever possible. Care should also be taken to evaluate the actions of the "aggressor" to establish to what extent they were within normal behaviour. Sharing bedrooms did create some difficult situations for some students and should be risk assessed.

This Standard has been largely met. The figure below relates to the percentage out of the fifty who answered the questionnaire.

Percentage of pupils reporting never or hardly ever being bullied**72 %**

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?**

2

The National Care Standards Commission had been appropriately notified about an allegation of abuse that was under investigation. The questionnaire sent to placing officers showed that 8 out of the 15 who responded confirmed that the school did notify them of significant events and 9 had been invited to the college to discuss such events.

On occasions the college has a student with severe and life threatening conditions. Sometimes these require frequent hospital admissions. A protocol needs to be devised whereby these will also be notified to the NCSC.

This Standard has been largely met.

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

1

0

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?**

2

The Head of Care has created good written guidance for staff about the absence of a student without authority. But the inspector did not see written procedures, which outlined the steps to be taken if a student were absent without consent, created for both parents and students. It was evident from the rules regarding curfew, signing out, and staying away from the college, that the college took the responsibility to protect students very seriously.

The inspector was told that no student had been absent without consent during the last twelve months but one had been missing and was then found in the grounds. There were no sanctions directed explicitly to being absent without consent and the staff reported that it was not a matter that gave rise to concern. The vice principal was responsible for monitoring that area.

Although the written guidance was not fully available to parents and children, the college took sufficient steps to ensure that students were in the college to regard this Standard as nearly met.

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?	2
<p>The inspectors observed that relationships with staff in the school were based generally on mutual respect and understanding. The Head of Care reported that more work was in hand to develop the use of praise for students but the staff did not demonstrate a negative approach. The document on the use of touch referred to already was an example of the college's attempt to clarify difficult areas for staff and to set out what professional boundaries were.</p> <p>The majority of the elements of this Standard were met. Some of the sixth form students did experience difficulties entering a boarding school at often well over 16 years. They moved from living at home with considerable personal freedom to living in what they saw as a much more restricted social world (this was by no means always the case). A few of the older students, whilst expressing positive regard for staff, also commented on inconsistency of treatment for different students, or that staff as a group were inconsistent in their response, hostile or temperamental, or treated them as children. It was not easy to find the right approach for the varied levels of maturity and dependency within the student group. The inspector was aware that the college was reviewing possible arrangements for students over 18 years of age. Nonetheless, some of the critical comments needed to be explored by the staff.</p> <p>Younger students also made a few complaints about inconsistency, and that some (newer) staff needed more training 'in dealing with the visually impaired'. Generally, communication between staff and students was observed to be positive and reasonable.</p> <p>This Standard has been largely met.</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**

As indicated in the previous section, staff did respond positively to acceptable behaviour. Sanctions were used for situations when rules were breached. Staff sought a range of ways to respond to those students whose behaviour required an intense and different kind of response because of elements of autism or asperger's syndrome.

The college has provided good guidance on the use of disciplinary measures. The reporting structure was clear and met the requirements of the Standards.

There was no evidence of restraint being used at the college recently. The recording structure for such actions met almost all of the requirements of Standard 10.14. (It was short of a description of the nature of the physical intervention.)

The procedures stated that the Vice Principal would monitor such actions and would review any patterns that might cause concern. At present the Governing Body or a representative of it does not comment on them during a governor's visit.

Students had information on what the rules were and what were the sanctions. Although, as with the previous Standard, some did express difficulties with different treatment for different students, the majority, (80%), considered that punishments were given out fairly most, or all, of the time. Fairness was very important to them. The college is advised to find ways to help staff explain why particular approaches were taken in particular circumstances.

Some older students complained of staff inconsistency. Staff needed to be very clear about how their responses were co-ordinated as a team.

Students were lively and orderly and a pleasure to be amongst.

This standard was met.

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

Students confirmed in discussion groups and in individual interviews that their admission to the college had been planned well in advance, and that they did not disagree with the plan. They had had a period of assessment at the college that had included an overnight stay. Parents had been sent information that had included a video that they had watched and heard. This process enabled them to understand why the school was considered to meet their needs. (Some of the students did however comment that the video and the prospectus needed to be updated).

The stay for assessment also helped the students gain some insight into what the experience of boarding at the college might be like for them.

Students' files indicated that the college was trying to obtain as much information as was available about the child in advance. The college's liaison teacher was very experienced in this. In a few situations the college had feared that there had been an attempt to disguise some difficulties, particularly those which "may make the child particularly vulnerable or a danger to others". The Principal stated that this would not exclude a child from admission but full information made it easier to obtain the level of help needed for the student.

Once students were admitted all received an induction period. Any who arrived after the term had started would receive a personally arranged one.

Transitional reviews provided evidence that the procedures surrounding carefully planned exits were in place.

This Standard was met well.

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 of the elements of this Standard were met.

The Vice Principal attended the care staff meetings on Monday mornings. In addition the college had restructured the roles of the pastoral team leaders, (PTLs). These were teachers with specific responsibility for the tutors in different parts of the school, lower, middle and sixth form. They visited the houses in rotation and gave specific feedback about the educational progress of the members of the house to the house parents. They also received key information from house parents or residential care tutors. This appeared to be a significant force in integrating the work of the education and care team members. Both parties welcomed this development. It counteracted the isolation from the academic side of the college that care staff sometimes felt. It was often not possible for them to be involved with formal meetings with the teaching staff because of caring for the students at the time. It was lead and supported by the Vice Principal.

The Inspector observed this process in operation. It concerned amongst other things giving feed back to a member of the house staff about a young person's review, looking very broadly at emotional and social needs, and identifying which educational targets could be helped by work within the house, such as additional help for the student with reading.

In addition to the support and encouragement that the care staff gave to the students in their academic work, the inspector was told of the developing integration of independence skills within the school and within the houses. This came from an 'interdisciplinary' working party which drew on the experience and practices of both the teaching and residential staff. Those methods were being collated into a manual of information that would promote consistency within the college. It was also planned to be available to give practical information and advice to parents.

The inspector considered that the college has met this Standard well.

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?****3**

The college has established a wide range of activities, both indoor and outdoor. They were well publicised to students in the houses and were largely popular. 60% of students stated in the student survey that there were plenty, or enough, activities available that they liked. This very popularity restricted access for those students who would have liked to participate more, as outdoor activities inevitably had to be limited in terms of numbers. Some expressed their disappointment in person to inspectors and in the questionnaire replies.

House parents noted that weekend activities could restrict what happened in the houses. The Gap students frequently accompanied trips with the activity staff to ensure that there were sufficient adults for any trip to be safe. This left house staff on their own with the remainder of the group, and if a particular member of that group did not wish to participate in an activity with the rest of the house outside, it sometimes prevented the plan taking place. (See also Standard 28).

Risk assessments for each activity were carried out by the activities staff who in turn were qualified for the activities which they led. They had also increased the use of outdoor centres that had their own trained staff to lead the activity with the students.

The inspector saw that the common room, run by the sixth form, was being positively used by students as a source of relaxation.

The college has met this Standard.

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**

In general the school met the requirements to promote actively the health care of each child. There were however a few shortcomings.

Some of the young people admitted to the college had very specialised health requirements. The college had ensured that there was sufficient training available to carry out specialised tasks when needed. Inspectors encountered a number of staff who expressed lack of confidence in carrying out this role. The inspector considered that the college should find additional ways to support those staff. They may benefit from further training to reinforce their practice and from additional staff support at critical times when the rest of the students in the house could not receive the level of attention they needed. The contrast with this staff group's confidence in helping students with visual impairment and blindness was a matter for concern.

The inspector was informed that the college's Personal, Social and Health Education Curriculum covered the topics listed within Standard 14.4. Students confirmed that they were given education in sexual and health matters but indicated that they would also welcome more opportunities to discuss these topics informally and explore them in relation to themselves. The inspector heard that it was planned to invite house staff to attend some aspects of training in this with the teaching staff in PSHE, similar to the planned development of independence skills.

Students had a written health plan in a number of different places. There was the medicare plan which was co-ordinated between the surgery and the house each day for those who were on medication. Records of developmental checks were maintained in school records, and specific therapies that any student needed were subject to a written protocol for that student.

There was always one staff member qualified in first aid available.

The pharmacy inspector reviewed Standards 14.10 to 14.25. The majority were met. The inspector was concerned, however, by the use of a compliance aid, a Dosette box, which the nurse used to give to the houseparent to administer medicines for one student with frequent and changing needs for medication. This prevented the person administering the medication from seeing the original containers. Secondary dispensing is not recommended because of the potential for error. It was agreed that, given the unique set of circumstances, this practice could continue with a clear and detailed procedure. Two staff must be involved in the dispensing of medication and they should sign to agree that the correct medication was put into the Dosette box. Accurate records must be kept of all changes to medication. A list of current medication should be provided with the Dosette box and given to the house parents in order for them to check the medication.

Medication was securely locked in medicine cabinets in the Clinic. There were some loose strips of medication in one cabinet which should be returned to the pharmacy for disposal.

One Sixth Form student was not self-medicating and this was administered by the care team. Medication was observed to be stored in a locked cupboard. The key for this cupboard was kept in a key cabinet in the office. It is recommended that keys for the medicine cupboard should be restricted to authorised staff only. The same point applied to

one other house which was inspected. The policy regarding keys must be reviewed in all of the houses.

In one house the inspector saw eye drops stored in a domestic refrigerator that was not lockable. A lockable container should be used for the storage of medicine in the refrigerator. All the refrigerators used in houses, which might need to contain medicines, should also be lockable or include lockable containers.

There were shortcomings in provision for security of the students' medicines in the Sixth Form Hostel. Students retained them in their rooms and had to provide their own lock and key for security. The inspector recommended that the school should have a fall back policy for care staff to have access to a drawer or cupboard with permission of the student.

She has also recommended that allergies and date of birth should be recorded on the Medicine administration record (the MAR chart).

The pharmacy inspector recommended that the medicine policy should be reviewed every two years. It should include details on how medicines are obtained, stored and recorded. The policy should include the action to be taken if an administration error is made.

The elements of this Standard are not yet fully met.

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?	4
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Students' views on the food varied. The majority indicated that they saw it as average but individual views ranged from very positive to negative.

Records of meals taken in the school dining room were checked and were kept for longer than the time required by this standard. This may be appropriate for other agencies. House records were not checked on this occasion; see standard 19.

Taking meals with students in the school dining room and in the houses confirmed that mealtimes were orderly and pleasant occasions. Exploration with students indicated that there were some times when a student was withdrawn from a meal in a house if the student became too stressed. There was no suggestion that such withdrawal was routine.

The college placed strong emphasis on students learning to prepare food for themselves from the start as part of the recognition for students' needs to develop independence.

Detailed examination of each element of this Standard demonstrated that it was well met.

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 inspector examined each element of this Standard and found that all had been met.

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 is 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?

2

There was a written plan for each student set out in their house that was based on "targets" identified during the Annual Reviews. They were often accompanied with detailed accounts of what aspects were being worked on in the house. They were consistent with the Review findings. Some students were clear that such plans existed and some were not, even when it was evident that work was done between them and care staff members to promote particular targets. The inspector recommends that students have a copy of the targets that will be worked on with care staff in whatever format suits their skills. This was already the case for students in year 10 and above.

The inspector noted a problem in year 12. Targets were set in the year 11 Review that looked forward to GCSE examinations. Students entered the sixth form with no recently created plan for the period which followed. This could create difficulties for some who needed to have a more specific focus at this time. There was a very good outline structure for plans in place in students' files, 'Survival and Arrival' and the '6th Form Personal Development Plan'. These needed to pull together all of the relevant information from the previous school or GCSE year in the college and develop, with the student, an initial plan to work on.

Students in the junior houses did not have a key worker in addition to their house parent, who took on the key responsibility for all the students in that house. In the sixth form key workers were selected from the group of house and hostel tutors. It did not appear that students had any choice in this process. After an initial allocation of students to key workers it may be possible to have a formal time when that allocation is reviewed. This would provide an opportunity for all students to have their wishes taken into account, whilst realising that it was not always feasible to meet every wish. It was already the practice to make changes at other times, when, for example, a key worker was sick or other problems arose.

Sessions with key workers to discuss progress on targets did not appear to happen as frequently as they were designed to. This was partly due to the ill health of the team leader, whose students had been allocated to other colleagues, thereby swelling their lists. However, the impression was given that work on students' individual plans could reach more effective levels. One student cynically pointed out that he or she had had the same target since year 7, another that they were put in for the benefit of the local education authorities. What concerned the inspector was evidence in one student's file that staff were not providing sufficient help with self-care and self-organisation to promote the successful work habits that were needed at that stage. Whilst recognising that this was untypical of that group of young people at that time, it did point to the system failing to provide sufficient help. Fuller involvement of the students themselves in the process is recommended.

In outline this target should have been met, the school systems provided for it. In practice it was not fully met.

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?

2

The college kept each student's file very securely, which was commendable. The files were not structured in such a way as to make it immediately clear that they contained information required by Standard 18. Careful exploration confirmed that in the small sample examined the information was present.

Discussion with students indicated that they were not aware that they had a right to see or know about those parts of their files that did not contain third party or confidential information.

This Standard is not yet fully met.

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?****2**

Inspectors were able to see records of students placed at the college that contained all of the information required by Standard 19.2. Staff were listed separately on the computer register and in personnel files. The staff's qualifications were seen in the personnel files. Personnel files did not contain evidence of CRB checks, these were seen to be kept securely in the Bursar's office, otherwise information required was largely in place.

The college had a record of all accidents that occurred to children and others on the premises.

The inspector saw the record of menus served in the school dining room for a number of years, but not those held in all of the houses. In one seen, there were gaps. House staff needed to ensure that there is a full record of what is served there. It is not clear to what extent this requirement would also apply to students over sixteen, catering for themselves in the context of learning to be independent. The college has pointed out that it would be considered too intrusive to monitor the eating patterns of those 6th formers who have been "signed off" as capable of dealing with their own food in the evenings.

This Standard was largely met.

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?****3**

The school's general commitment to the well being of students and their families was seen in the development of regional parents' meetings, as indicated under Standard 2. These increased the level of communication and sense of involvement that parents could have with their children's school despite their distance from it. It also increased opportunities for parents to meet others and gain practical support from one another. The Governing Body was also anxious to make contact with and offer different kinds of support to parents.

The inspector found that house parents were concerned to have good relationships with parents. There were few situations when restrictions on contact were needed. The Head of Care explained that if a parent or family member little known to the school were to request to see a child, this would only be with the other parent's consent and would not take place off the premises. Staff would be available to monitor a child's well being.

As has been mentioned earlier, there were insufficient spaces in the houses, where bedrooms were shared, for parents to visit a child there in privacy. Other spaces could be available in the main school, or in the houses at particular times. The majority of parents who answered questions about contact with their son or daughter at the school, 33 out of 39, reported that they were encouraged to visit and, in all cases, could see their child in private. The college was able to offer accommodation to parents for brief stays. This was observed and was good practice.

The Principal was deeply committed to developing good working relationships between staff and children's families to promote students links with their families. This was perceived as an area to take forward. Further training in working with and supporting parents was planned.

This Standard has been met.

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

Very few children were being looked after by a local authority. When present, they usually received a Transitional Review to start planning their leaving well before the time came.

One of the central purposes of the college was to help and encourage young people to develop their academic and independence skills. This should enable them to live independently and have good opportunities for a career. The school appeared very successful in this.

In the one situation examined which was not so straightforward, the inspector found a range of possibilities proposed which could not be pursued until the exam results were known. The college was deeply committed to ensuring good futures for its young people and worked closely with placing authorities to facilitate this.

This Standard has been well met.

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

The college has created structures that were in place to offer students high levels of individual support when they needed it. As well as having relatively small groups in the houses for younger children, students can approach their form tutors, the pastoral team leaders, the vice principal, the nurse, and the school counsellors. In the sixth form hostel the large number of tutors also filled that role. The availability of the GAP students, supported by the Deputy Head of Care, increased the range of younger people whom students could talk to.

The school counsellors were well supported by the vice principal. In addition, they were both qualified and received professional supervision outside the college. As well as providing a service to individual students they had embarked on some group work together. This helped students recognise problems as being shared by others. The vice principal was also giving direct individual support to a small number of students.

The college was increasing its knowledge of work with young people with elements of autistic spectrum disorders. One young person confirmed that effective help was being given.

This is a Standard which the college has met well.

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
<p>The college was well located, towards the edge of the city and surrounded by countryside at the back. It fronted onto a busy dual carriage way at the front, which caused safety problems and required students to abide by stringent safety regulations when they were outside the college.</p> <p>The college has created an environment that accommodated the needs of children with vision loss carefully. Differences in texture on the paths contributed to wards mobility. It was designed to make it as easy as possible for students not to need mobility aids when on the campus. Colour and lighting have been chosen to maximise the conditions for studying, whilst recognising that some students had conflicting physical needs.</p> <p>The college has informed the inspectors that there were no outstanding requirements or recommendations from other regulatory bodies in relation to the buildings. The college has made some parts of the site inaccessible since they currently pose safety hazards. The Bursar was considering how to dismantle the Maze, and how to provide more attractive and usable play space for younger children.</p> <p>As indicated earlier, thefts of college property, particularly of IT equipment, have led to the introduction of CCTV. This was positioned at different parts of the site and in different internal corridors. The college has stated that parents were told of its introduction and welcomed it. The inspector advises that this is included in the information that the college gives to all parents.</p> <p>One house also used a 'baby alarm' to alert staff to any worrying change in a child's state of health during the night. This was included in planning for the child concerned.</p> <p>The inspector was aware of how thoroughly the environment was reviewed although a public access path still crossed the bottom of a playing field. The college has managed to have parts of the path moved, but not yet all of it. It was said to be little used.</p> <p>This Standard was met.</p>		

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?****2**

The college has provided living accommodation and facilities for students out of class time which is homely, largely appropriate to the young people's ages and was appropriately furnished and decorated.

Although interiors and exteriors of the different buildings appeared well maintained overall, there were signs of some damage to furniture that needed attention. There were some instances of drawers without a handle or handles, underbed drawers that were not intact, some wardrobes with dropped hinges or without a handle. Some of the chairs in bedrooms were very unsteady.

Most of the furnishings reached a satisfactory standard but this was not the case for all. The college needed to devise a process whereby students would check and inform house parents regularly about the condition of furniture and plumbing in their room, and house parents or other residential staff would themselves check to identify whether there were additional problems. Problems then need rapid attention by the maintenance services. The inspector understood that such a process was in operation but additional action needed to be taken to make it more effective.

The inspectors heard of the Bursar's progress in planning new furniture for one house in discussion with some young people, the house parent and Head of Care. A sample was tested prior to purchase. The inspectors were a little concerned that not all of the drawers in this set of furniture that should be lockable closed in such a way that they could be locked.

This report has referred already to students' complaints about lack of privacy when using the telephones in the houses. It was particularly disappointing to find that no attempts were seen to increase the soundproofing in Brown House. This was the telephone that students criticised most frequently for being overheard by staff and for noise intruding from the stairway, on this and on previous inspections.

A very few children did share bedrooms with others who were much more than two years older or younger. Discussion with staff suggested that the structure of the boarding accommodation made this occasionally impossible to avoid. When both boys and girls lived in a house, the options available were few, if a much younger or much older student joined during the year. It was made additionally difficult by the broad age spread before students left for the sixth form hostel. The college was searching for ways to meet this element of the Standard. It was not acceptable for some students with such wide differences in age to share the same rooms.

Students' feedback indicated that sharing rooms also appeared to pose difficulties for those who shared with students with a behaviour difficulty.

The college met other elements of this Standard but has not fully met it overall.

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?**

2

Decoration and maintenance of toilets, bathrooms and showers needed attention more regularly than the rest of the houses. A few were found to be in need of further maintenance.

There was a difficulty in Brown House with the sleeping in room having been change back from one with en suite facilities, to a much smaller room. The occupants were once more without a staff bathroom.

The majority of other elements in this Standard were met.

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?**

3

The Bursar was taking all necessary steps to ensure that the buildings and grounds posed no hazards. There was extensive guidance to staff in the staff handbook on Health and Safety at work. (This may need some updating of names and initials).

Inspectors were shown reports of gas and electrical safety inspections. House records sampled indicated that fire evacuation drills were kept and recorded correctly.

Risks assessments were in use widely. Although the college did not accept emergency admissions it is advised to carry out risk assessments for those students who pose particular challenges as a result of the broadened criteria for admission.

This Standard has been met.

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?

2

The college has developed a good format for recording the staff vetting process. Since the introduction of the new Standards, however, it needs some further expansion.

- The reference request letter now needs to ask referees to state any known reason **why** the person should not be employed to work with children. It should tell referees that there should be no material mis-statement or omission relevant to the suitability of the candidate.
- One of the references must be from the most recent employer, not just a previous employer.
- The college must make direct contact with each referee to verify the reference.
- The interview must have a written record of the outcome.
- The applicants must be required to supply a full employment history and be told that any previous employer may be approached by the college.
- There should be contact by the college, where possible, with each previous employer involving work with children or vulnerable adults to check the reasons why the employment ended.

The inspectors were made aware that the Bursar keeps the disclosure application forms. The NCSC can confirm that it is acceptable to keep the Disclosure Record until such time as it has been seen by an Inspector from the NCSC. A process should be developed to make it clear in each case that this has happened.

Despite the commendable work that had been undertaken by the college to ensure that the vetting process had covered every aspect, further work needed to be done to meet the new Standard.. All of the processes should be verifiable in recruitment records held at the college.

This Standard has not yet been fully met.

Total number of care staff:	17	Number of care staff who left in last 12 months:	4
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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?****2**

The college has set out the current level of staffing within the houses and hostel to meet its Statement of Purpose.

The staffing policy covered all of the points required in Standard 28.2. This provided for two staff on duty during the week at those times when the students were in their houses. This dropped to one staff member with back up from a GAP student during the weekends. Many younger students went home at the weekends and this was considered to be sufficient cover.

The sixth form hostel and house were together staffed from 7.30 till 9.15am and from lunch time till the evening, with 2 to 3 staff there in the afternoon, and then 3 staff from 4.0 then till 11pm. GAP students contributed towards maintaining this level and were not supernumerary.

One staff member slept in each house, including the sixth form house, each night. Two staff slept in the hostel. Standard 28.6 states that where a single member of staff is on waking or sleeping in duty in all cases a risk assessment should be carried out and recorded in writing (eg in a daily log) to demonstrate that there is no unacceptable level of risk. Senior staff were available on a rostered basis to give support to residential staff. The inspector heard of times when the Head of Care took a child to hospital at night.

The inspectors considered that this level of staffing only just maintained safety levels at times. The weekends, when a GAP student might not be available because of helping with activities, houseparents described as potentially difficult. Disturbed nights at the hostel through a student's ill health staff also found hard. It was not possible during this inspection to examine the exact numbers of children at each house during the weekends and explore whether they were always sufficiently low to drop staff numbers.

The inspector heard that an increase in the staff level, which had come about from closing one house, had since been absorbed into the full time establishment and had not continued to provide an overall increase. The inspector advises the school to monitor the relationship between the staff levels and the stress or anxiety which staff express.

Additional staff were provided to work with children with additional needs.

The majority of these Standards were met, but the inspector would welcome further information about the points made.

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**

The college was using an Induction Training Programme relating to its own checklists of information that a new staff member must know and the TOPSS induction/foundation booklets.

The Vice Principal of the college initiated additional training. Staff spoke with enthusiasm of sessions on both autism and epilepsy. Some pointed out that they wished it had come much earlier. Those staff who needed to be involved with dialysis were also provided with specialised training. Planned were study days on child protection for all staff, bereavement, hearing impairment and behaviour management. Nominated care staff would attend courses on food hygiene and first aid.

The college has met this Standard.

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?****2**

The staff in the college had clear lines of accountability. Although there were appropriate formats and routines for supervision of the residential child care staff, the practice of supervision was patchy and did not always meet staff's needs. Times were not always set out sufficiently in advance, notes were not always kept which indicated that the topics within the format had been addressed, sometimes there was insufficient space to use the opportunity to provide support to staff as well as focussed task supervision. Staff clearly appreciated it when it worked well.

It was also difficult for house parents to provide formal supervision for their teams with whom they worked so closely. 'Live' supervision was often needed immediately and seemed at the time more appropriate. However, that did not give either team member or supervisor the opportunity to plan in advance and reflect on issues that needed to be explored outside emergency situations.

As already indicated, inspectors found high levels of anxiety amongst some staff members. Sometimes this was task focussed and sometimes more personal. It appeared that for staff to be more effective the college and the Head of Care needed to address the levels of anxiety that existed.

This standard was not fully met.

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?	2
<p>The college was fortunate in that both the Head of Care and the Deputy Head of Care had considerable experience of working in residential child care settings at a senior level and both were fully professionally qualified.</p> <p>Many of the staff had lengthy experience of working in the college. Ten of the other seventeen members of the care staff had a qualification from the RNIB, the award or certificate in Care, which included specific requirements to demonstrate competencies in the residential care of children with vision loss. The inspector was told that it was not possible to demonstrate the qualification's equivalence within NVQ awards at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People although it did meet the requirements for level 2. Three staff have an NVQ level 3 in Care, and it may be that some additional elements would bring it into equivalence. One other staff member has an HND in Care which the college understands to be regarded as equivalent. To meet the goal of achieving 80% of staff with that level of qualification by 2005, NVQ Assessors should be trained now and this was in hand. Six other staff were about to start working towards the qualification itself. The percentage figure given at the base of this standard includes the qualifications of the head and Deputy Head of Care and of the nurse.</p> <p>The Deputy Head of Care was responsible for ensuring that the staff rotas enabled staff to attend the meetings and complete the tasks outlined in Standard 31.5. This had not been easy when two staff had been subject to ill health.</p> <p>Standard 31.10 sets out very clearly that key information should be provided to parents of each child 'which summarises the school's child protection, anti-bullying, disciplinary, complaints, health and pastoral policies and practice'. The information sent to sixth form parents last year gave good information of routines, activities, duties of the sixth form, rules and regulations and sanctions. Most of the policies listed above, however, were referred to very briefly. Parents were invited to send for the Sixth Form Handbook if they wished to know more. This did not meet with the intention of this Standard. The Inspector would advise that parents were always provided with the level of information which has sometimes been given in the college handbook.</p> <p>With the exception of that point, other elements of this Standard were met.</p>		
Percentage of care staff with relevant NVQ or equivalent child care qualification:	38	%

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?****2**

The description of this Standard (above) is misleading. The Standard is titled 'Business management and internal monitoring' and the outcome for this process is that 'Children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools'.

Information supplied to the inspector showed that the RNIB was responsible for the financial management of the college, under the Deed of Trust of 1936. The college's Governing Board, with management of the college, supervised this. All financial procedures were governed by the regulations of the charity. Day to day management of finance and business was delegated to the Principal and Bursar.

The Principal and senior management team kept all arrangements for internal monitoring under constant review and the weekly meetings of the SMT were the prime mechanism for this internal monitoring. This had enabled the college to anticipate difficulties and respond in a measured way.

Discussion with the members of the senior management team confirmed that these arrangements were in place. The Head of Care looked particularly at the consistency between the houses, differences in the patterns of sanctions and took care to develop the use of talking to children as a major form of social control.

The information flow between the houses and the school appeared to be improved by the contact with the pastoral team leaders. This was manifest by better knowledge of who to contact and a reduction in conflict.

The Head of Care fed back the results of his monitoring of the work of the houses through weekly contact with the Principal. This included the appraisal of the care staff for whom he was responsible. It was done similarly by the Deputy Head of Care and the head of the sixth form residential tutors.

Checking house records and individual students records was done from time to time and would benefit from being more regularly time tabled.

The vice principal also monitored a number of records, the use of restraint and of absences, for example, and the work of the college's counsellors, whilst having good processes to maintain confidentiality.

The inspector concluded that there was considerable monitoring in hand within the college. Some would benefit by being more systematic and the inspector would advise the college to set out clearly who monitors what activity, how frequently, and who would take what action if some pattern or trend were to be of concern. This would facilitate the assessment of Standard 32 and make it easier to demonstrate that the college met it fully.

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**

The Governing Board was developing a pattern of visits by different members of the pastoral care sub-committee to different houses. At present there was only one visit a term. It provided governors with an opportunity to know the residential care functioning in the college at greater depth and to be available to both students and staff should they wish to make any kind of representation. This had already happened and had been pursued further. Reports went verbally to the pastoral care sub-committee and later in writing to the governing body as a whole.

These visits did not include checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, and use of physical interventions as outlined in 33.3. The Principal has pointed out that the work of the governing body is itself governed by legislation and this requirement was outside it.

Although these visits do not meet all the elements in this Standard, they were clearly well conducted and very useful. The inspector saw later, however, the monitoring visit report of the RNIB Care Services Officer. This was carried out shortly before the NCSC inspection. It did include the points above. It was also much more broad ranging and should also make a very valuable contribution to the college's monitoring process.

This Standard was met.

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)****Lay Assessor** _____ **Signature** _____**Date** _____**Lead Inspector** Sue Moodie**Signature** _____**Date of final report** 21st May 2004

PART D**HEAD'S RESPONSE**

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

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

YES

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 27 February 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

NO

Action plan was received at the point of publication

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

NO

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 Nick Ratcliffe of RNIB New College 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 and that I agree with the recommended actions made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name	<u>N.A.Ratcliffe</u>
Signature	<u></u>
Designation	<u>Principal</u>
Date	<u>10.03.04</u>

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of RNIB New College 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 for the following reasons:

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Print Name	<u></u>
Signature	<u></u>
Designation	<u></u>
Date	<u></u>

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.