

New College Worcester

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

Unique reference number for social care	SC043048
Unique reference number for education	117064
Inspection dates	16/01/2012 to 18/01/2012
Inspector	Dawn Taylor

School address	New College Worcester, 2 Whittington Road, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR5 2JU
Telephone number	01905 763933
Email	msmith@newcollegeworcester.co.uk
Headteacher	Ms Mardy Smith

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

New College Worcester (NCW) is a non-maintained special school, providing education and care for young people who are blind or partially sighted, within the eleven to nineteen age range, who are able to access the National Curriculum and progress to study beyond sixteen. There are currently eighty-one young people on roll, forty-one female and forty male. 17% of young people are from a minority ethnic group. All current young people are residential on a termly or weekly basis. Whilst all young people have visual impairment, some also have additional needs, for example relating to hearing impairment or Asperger's Syndrome. Young stay in three residential houses (for young people in Year 7 to 11), a sixth form hostel, and house. All residential accommodation is located on campus. The residential provision was last inspected in January 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- This is a good service that proactively meets the individual needs of young people and effectively supports them to make outstanding personal progress to achieve their full potential.
- The school meets all the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards. At the last Ofsted inspection the service was judged to be good overall with outstanding features. At this inspection they continue to be judged as good overall with outstanding judgements in outcomes for young people and safeguarding.
- There is a true commitment to promoting equality and diversity, which permeates throughout the school. This results in an environment where the individual is valued and their needs are promoted.
- Young people feel that staff commitment to supporting them at all stages of their progression through school is a key strength.
- Safeguarding is at the forefront of practice at the school. Policies, procedures, staff practice and training continues to be reviewed and developed in line with societal trends and behaviours, changes to legislation and the needs of the young people.
- The school's management team ensure proper scrutiny of all aspects of residential care. Any shortfalls in these areas are identified and addressed. This quality monitoring and other similar initiatives continue to be developed to ensure the improving quality of the provision.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Young people are developing outstanding personal, emotional and social skills, which promote independence, self-esteem and to form positive lasting relationships with their peers and adults.

Young people are able to discuss how the school has helped them to develop excellent confidence in living life with a visual impairment. For example, the mobility team works alongside young people, and all their supporting staff, to develop individual's skills and to learn specific geographical routes. This team continues to support young people throughout their schooling. They are present at induction to familiarise young people with the school site, they support any internal class or house moves and will give special specific support if a young person requests it.

Young people become valued, active members of the school community and develop excellent skills in interacting with others and expressing views and opinions. They are encouraged to contribute to the running of the school and feel their views and opinions are acted upon. Young people are represented on the school's equality and diversity steering group and therefore influence and monitor the school's equality and diversity action plan. They can also become members of the school council. Both the head girl and head boy feel they have influenced changes to the operation of the school and therefore outcomes for young people. They have specifically promoted social inclusion with local mainstream schools and the reinstatement of a peer support system.

Young people make excellent progress in looking after their health and leading healthy lives. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle is successfully integrated into the ethos of the school. For example, young people are educated on how to live a healthy lifestyle through discussion groups in lessons that cover healthy eating, exercise, environmental issues and drug awareness. This is reinforced in key worker sessions, discussions in care, an extensive programme of physical activities, outside visits and external speakers.

Young people's social development is promoted at all times and is outstanding. The enjoyment and achievement of the young people is a key strength of the service. It continues to be developed with the recent appointment of a member of staff who will co-ordinate all weekend activities on campus, to complement the work of the school's activities department. The extensive range of activities are appreciated and enjoyed by all young people who state 'they're excellent', 'very good', 'have given me excellent opportunities and experiences' and, 'have enabled me to experience and do things I never thought I would be able to achieve'. The programme provides ample opportunity for activities and exercise that includes Duke of Edinburgh Awards, yoga, rifle club, scouts, judo and many sporting activities. One young person stated, 'if I had stayed in mainstream education I would not be sailing or horse riding'.

Young people successfully develop the skills they require as adults. Staff are able to

tailor support depending upon the individual's needs and ability. It is the ethos of the school to involve and nurture young people to develop life skills throughout their schooling and is a central theme to the residential experience. There are excellent arrangements to ensure that young people learn the skills they need for adult life and achieve their full potential.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of residential provision and care is good. The school promotes a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity and difference. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Young people receive an individual service, which is designed to meet their personal needs. All staff have good knowledge of the young people they are working with, ensuring their needs are met. Staff work in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure a good quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of young people.

Young people feel strongly that a key strength of this service are the staff teams. Staff have constructive relationships with young people and are supportive in assisting them to communicate their views and opinions and learn new skills. This positive engagement creates respectful relationships, which enable staff to have sensitive conversations with young people. These day-to-day discussions and key worker sessions support young people to address difficulties and learn new skills to progress socially, emotionally and physically.

The school has effective systems that support young people to transition in and out of school, and also make internal moves. For example, young people new to boarding are given information about what to expect and are encouraged to visit before starting boarding. Information and advice is also provided to parents. Admissions to the school are well planned and clear policies and procedures are established and followed. One young person stated, 'I was scared when I first arrived but I was made to feel welcome and at home'. There is a strong emphasis on supporting and developing the independence skills of all young people, but especially post-16, in preparation for their transition from the school. Good, supportive work is carried out in the post-16 house and hostel. Young people are very positive about the level of support and guidance provided from staff. They feel they are treated as young adults, with respect, and respond accordingly.

Health care provision in the school is good. The school employs two qualified, part-time nurses who ensure young peoples health care needs are taken into account throughout their school education, from assessment through to transition onto further education or employment. For example, pre-entry assessment is undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team and these reports evidence recommendations for personalised programmes, including support for young people who have additional health support needs.

All staff have excellent awareness of young peoples health needs relating to the

complexities of visual impairment. Medication is administered within the homes and the clinic area and there are some young people who are administering their own medication. However, the process for assessing young people as sufficiently responsible to do so, is not transparent.

The provision of meals at the school continues to be good, with the school kitchen maintaining a good rating from environmental health. Menus include foods from different cultures, cater for young people's dietary restrictions and requirements, and encourage them to try new and healthy dishes. Sixth form students are supported with the budgeting, shopping and preparation of their meals through the school's independence living scheme. One parent stated there are, 'caring staff who are always promoting wellbeing, independence and social integration'.

The accommodation is of a good standard across the school campus. All residential areas are cared for equally by the staff team and young people. There has been continuing work to maintain the standard of accommodation as areas become worn and tired. For example, since the last inspection, new kitchens have continued to be fitted in the sixth form hostel. This work is on going. Although upgrading continues there is no formal written rolling programme of refurbishment and redecoration work. This means that when, for example, a review of lighting across site takes place, staff and young people are unclear about when the work will actually take place as there is not a programme of work to give clear time frames.

Residential pupils' safety

Residential pupil's safety is outstanding. Young people say that they feel safe at the school. They are systematically protected from harm by robust arrangements for safe welfare. For example, there are effective comprehensive policies on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of young people, which are known to young people, parents and staff. These underpin an established programme of induction and training for all staff that includes listening to complaints, safeguarding young people, promoting positive behaviour, e-safety and anti bullying. This ensures all policies are implemented successfully in practice.

As a result, staff sensitively respect young people's need for privacy and confidentiality. They promote an open approach to complaints, and successfully support young people to make their views known. They do not tolerate bullying behaviour and where issues arise they are addressed. All staff are very aware of the vulnerability issues for young people with visual impairments. There is continual debate and discussion with regard to the important balance between promoting independence and keeping young people safe. Major behavioural issues are minimal and those incidents that do occur are managed in a way that allows young people to learn by their mistakes.

Safeguarding of young people continues to be a high priority within the school. All staff and volunteers have completed training in safeguarding and appropriate staff

guidance and safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and regularly reviewed. This ensures staff understand, and are clear about what they should do if there is a safeguarding issue and are familiar with the referral process to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Young people express confidence in the safety and security of the school. They learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they regularly practice the emergency escape drill and staff receive fire training. Safe procedures are in place to protect young people through tests on fire systems and other electrical equipment at appropriate intervals. Environmental risk assessments are in place to ensure the school is fully informed about potential hazards to reduce risks.

Young people continue to be protected by the school's robust recruitment systems that ensures all staff employed complete the necessary recruitment checks and are deemed suitable to work before commencement of employment. Proactive monitoring of visitors to the school takes place, to prevent young people being exposed to unsuitable adults. This excellent practice further safeguards their welfare.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management are good. Young people continue to benefit from a well-managed school that is having a positive impact on their developmental outcomes. At the last inspection the school was good with outstanding features. There were four recommendations made and all have been met. The school's statement of purpose sets out all required areas of information about the school and boarding facilities. Young people are admitted to the school in accordance with the statement of purpose. Parents are provided with information that details the provisions for boarding at the school. The young people's guide is produced in different formats.

Since the last Ofsted inspection there is a new head of care and deputy head of care. New rotas have also been introduced to best meet the needs of young people. The senior management team see the coming year as a period of consolidation. Although there has been an amount of change, young people feel the quality of relationships with staff is a key strength of the school stating, 'staff are kind and helpful', and 'they certainly do an excellent job, I can't fault them'. The staff team are positive in their approach to working with young people. They are keen to achieve the best for the young people in their care. Staff have access to a wide variety of training opportunities. They are well trained, especially with regard to skills and abilities in supporting young people with visual impairment. The staff attitude and approach to training opportunities is very positive with a high number of staff achieving a relevant level 3 qualification or currently undertaking it.

The school has substantial strengths and a sustained record of delivering good performance and managing improvement. Where areas for improvement emerge the school recognises and manages them well. There is clear determination to continually raise standards in the delivery of care and education to the young people.

Regular senior staff team meetings ensure that all aspects of life in the school are discussed and monitored by the Principal. There are good systems in place to monitor all aspects of boarding and these continue to be developed. The school development plan identifies areas for the future development of the school and boarding provision.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- further develop risk assessment to ensure young people allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so
- produce a written development plan for refurbishment and redecoration across the school site

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16/01/2012

To all young people at New College Worcester

Inspection of New College Worcester

The residential provision at New College Worcester has been judged to be good overall.

There are outstanding outcomes for young people, a good quality care, outstanding systems for safeguarding and good leadership and management.

You told Ofsted the school has a number of strengths and continues to improve.

Some of the key strengths you identified were the wide range of activities available to you. The residential staff team who you felt were 'approachable', 'fun' and 'very supportive'. The systems in place to keep you safe.

Yours sincerely,

Dawn Taylor