

New College Worcester

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117064
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	379342
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	Janet Thompson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision 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.

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Hollyman
Headteacher	Mardy Smith (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2008
School address	Whittington Road Worcester WR5 2JX
Telephone number	01905 763933
Fax number	01905 761561
Email address	ssmith@newcollegeworcester.co.uk
Social care unique reference number	SC043048
Social care inspector	Dawn Bennett

Age group	11-19
Inspection date(s)	13–14 June 2012
Inspection number	379342



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Introduction

Inspection team

Janet Thompson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pauline Hilling-Smith

Additional Inspector

Dawn Bennett

Social Care Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 17 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 17 teachers. They observed residential times and held meetings with groups of students, staff, a parent, the Chair of the Governing Body and the governor responsible for safeguarding. At the same time as this inspection a monitoring inspection of the provision funded by the Education Funding Agency was carried out, the findings of which are detailed in a separate report. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and a social care inspector also shadowed this inspection. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at various documentation including safeguarding policies, the college development plan, tracking of students' progress and some detailed case studies. Inspectors also reviewed student questionnaires, staff questionnaires and the 28 parental questionnaires received.

Information about the school

New College Worcester is a non-maintained residential special school for students aged 11 to 19 years. The college also operates as a sixth form college for students aged 16 to 19 years funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). There were three such students during this inspection. The college provides education and care for young people who are blind or partially sighted from across the country and approximately a sixth of the students also have additional needs including hearing impairment and autistic spectrum disorders. All students board within the residential provision at the college and, therefore, no students are eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of places are funded by local authorities and all of these students have statements of special educational needs. There are a few students from abroad. Students start at the college at different ages and times in the school year. The college has specialist school status for sensory impairment and offers a range of outreach services to other schools. In addition to the National Curriculum and a wide range of AS and A level courses students learn Braille and develop independent living and mobility skills.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good residential school with a good sixth form. Achievement is good. The college is not outstanding because, although some students make outstanding achievement there is variation and some students do not always make as much progress as they could in lessons. Students who start at the college early in Key Stage 3 have the best chance of making outstanding achievement.
- The residential provision is good and students' outcomes are outstanding with particular success in developing skills for independent living. Students gain a very positive view of their own ability to be successful while at the college.
- Teaching is good, but sometimes teachers do not challenge every student or provide enough opportunities for them to be actively engaged, so that they learn to explain their ideas more effectively or solve problems for themselves.
- Students are very supportive of one another and behaviour is good. The strong focus on safety means that the vast majority of students feel safe at college and are confident to share their views and any concerns. All parents and carers who expressed views believe their child feels safe.
- Leadership and management are good and recent changes to governance have improved accountability and the positive impact of performance management. The curriculum is well devised so that it can be personalised and support spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The monitoring of learning has been strengthened since the last inspection and support for staff is helping to improve teaching. There is good monitoring of students' progress but this is not consistently rigorous across all subjects or areas of the college's work.
- In the residential provision there are a few minor weaknesses in quality assurance arrangements including day-to-day maintenance of accommodation

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and some of the safe storage of medication and recording of its administration.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase achievement by improving the progress students make in lessons by:
 - ensuring teachers plan more accurately so that they effectively challenge students working at different academic levels
 - encouraging more active participation from students including problem solving, discussion and reviewing each other's work.
- Improve the rigour of tracking progress and the quality of learning in lessons, including Braille, so that any students at risk of under-achieving can be given the necessary support quickly.
- Eradicate the weaknesses within practice in residential provision by improving quality assurance procedures to:
 - ensure day-to-day safety and maintenance of all residential accommodation
 - ensure the safe storage and recording of the administration of medication.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students make good progress across the college. Nearly all parents and carers believe their child is learning well. Many students make outstanding achievement in their mobility and independent living skills. These skills are learned effectively both in specific sessions and throughout the college day and residential time. At Key Stage 4, attainment is consistently at least in line with national expectations. The proportion of students who gained at least five high grades at GCSE including in English and mathematics over the last two years is slightly above average. The qualifications gained by students in the sixth form represent good achievement from the students' starting points which are often lower than usually expected for the same courses in other institutions. Cohorts are small but when analysed over a few years there is no difference in the progress made by different groups of students other than for those who have spent longer at the school. They nearly all progress at the expected rate when taking into account their starting points, but there are a few students who do not.

When students start at the college staff are quick to ensure that they learn the necessary skills to ensure full access to the curriculum, for example by learning Braille or to improve their use of Braille. This provision is good but the consistency with which students learn these skills is not fully analysed. Progress at Key Stage 3 is slightly slower than in other key stages but the skills to access the curriculum gained by students at this stage often help them to achieve more over time compared with

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other students who join the college later. In the best lessons, students learn very well because they are actively engaged throughout and need to think for themselves. In these lessons there are usually good opportunities for students to improve their skills including in reading and writing, often using Braille. In other lessons students do not make as much progress because they do not always have the opportunity to make active contributions to refine their knowledge and skills.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good and pupils achieve well over time. Parents, carers and students agree that teaching is good. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of the students' abilities to gain qualifications but, at times, do not encourage enough active participation and discussion in lessons. In the best lessons, students are actively involved in solving problems for themselves. For example, in a mathematics lesson observed students were asked to work together to calculate the area of an irregular three-dimensional shape. The teacher commented when they were on the right track but resisted the temptation to tell them how to do it. The students struggled at first but persisted well and eventually solved the problem for themselves and took great delight in their achievement. Teachers are keenly aware of promoting spiritual, moral social and cultural development in lessons. For example, there were many ethical issues highlighted in the lessons observed and a focus on developing empathy with other people's experiences. Teachers are skilled in their subjects and in the skills required to teach students who are blind or who have visual impairments. Staff plan lessons well to meet any additional needs that students have, for example by providing a greater level of structure for some students. Although improving, teachers do not always vary the level of academic challenge for students sufficiently. As a result there is variation in the amount of progress students make in individual lessons. This is not confined to any specific group of students or subject. In many lessons, there is very good challenge for different students but it is not consistent enough to raise achievement to outstanding. An example of strong challenge was observed in a sixth form English lesson where careful planning enabled students to work in particular pairs so that discussion and reviewing each other's work moved each student's learning forward.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students behave well and attend frequently. Students believe the friendships they make are a key strength of the college. Within lessons students behave well but are sometimes a little too passive and lacking in initiative when the teaching does not encourage their active involvement. Nearly all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very positive about how the college keeps their children safe both within the college and in the residences. Students are usually very supportive of each other and take pride in each other's achievements. The residential houses are caring communities and are viewed very positively by the students. Sometimes new students find it difficult to join well-established groups but they are supported well and the students involved feel staff from the college and residences listen and help them to resolve any issues. Students make good progress in learning how to keep

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themselves safe and are supported in college and the residences to understand different situations that may make them vulnerable. Additional curriculum opportunities and the focus on independent living skills make a significant contribution to increasing the students' abilities to keep themselves safe. There is a small amount of bullying including occasional name calling using language that is racist, homophobic or prejudiced against certain disabilities, but appropriate action is taken and staff from the residential provision and education take a strong line on teaching students why this is wrong. Students learn quickly and any who find following the rules difficult are supported well with a personalised approach so that their behaviour improves quickly. The behaviour-management system is underpinned by teaching students to understand the rights and wrongs and different perceptions of a situation. The rewards and sanctions for students are consistently implemented and adapted well to suit the different ages and needs of students as well as the differences between education and residential provision.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management team at the college have continued to raise standards of education and care at the college and in the residences so that they remain good. Careful analysis of students' progress, attainment and other outcomes has helped to focus whole-college improvements and support for staff. The substantial improvements in achievement at AS level since the last inspection is a very good example of how a concerted focus on improving provision has helped students achieve more. The rigour of this analysis is not consistent across all areas of the college's work. For example, the tracking of achievement in Braille, although good for individuals, is not as rigorous for evaluating the effectiveness of provision across the cohorts. Similarly, some of the quality assurance systems within the residential provision are not as rigorous as others so that minor shortfalls with regard to healthcare and accommodation have not been picked up.

There is good communication between the education and residential teams and this helps provision to be adapted for individual students and to promote the outstanding outcomes for independent living. The structure of governance was changed at the start of the year and the new structure has proved to be more effective in ensuring that there are clear lines of accountability and in increasing the speed at which changes to improve provision can be made. Students are fully involved in the college's persistent and effective work in promoting equality and developing a strong positive culture of diversity. The college has robust recruitment and safeguarding systems that help to protect students. The college offers a good range of subject choices in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The residential provision contributes extremely well to extending the curriculum and there are many exciting and challenging optional activities available for students with some exemplary practice in music, sport and outdoor activities. The adaptability of the curriculum and levels of support to meet individual needs are particular strengths and help to ensure equality for students attending the college. The college has successfully introduced some additional sessions to help learners develop the skills they will need to cope in future environments.

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Residential provision

The residential provision is good. The quality of care is good and provision is adapted well to meet the individual needs of students and to help keep them safe. Staff have high levels of expertise in working with students who are blind or have visual impairments and also meet any additional needs that students have. They provide highly effective support that helps students to make outstanding personal progress in their mobility and independent living skills. Students have positive relationships with each other and with staff that are based on trust and respect in a stable environment. This enables students to share their views and opinions. The respect and trust helps staff to have sensitive conversations with students and their parents or carers, which, in turn, can help students overcome any difficulties they are facing.

Many students arrive at the college with limited independent skills including hygiene and mobility. Excellent programmes developed from careful assessment help students to gain these skills. If students experience difficulties in these areas additional support is provided for a focused period during residential time and specific sessions are allocated within education.

Students have many opportunities to help develop their social skills and have access to a wide range of activities that promote new interests and involvement in the college community and beyond. The college has identified that some students need more support to ensure they are fully prepared for the next stage of their lives and is working effectively across education and residential provision to provide this.

There is excellent staff consistency and continuity of care for individual students. There are a few minor weaknesses in practice that need improvement. Medication is administered within the homes and the clinic and there are some young people who administer their own medication. Although occasionally some storage and recording of the administration of medication is not being undertaken in line with policies and procedures, all concerns were addressed during the inspection.

The college demonstrates a clear commitment to developing facilities for students with work planned to develop play equipment within the grounds and refurbishment to the music and catering facilities. Staff and students are involved in developing a college refurbishment plan. Although there are systems for reporting work required there is not a regular audit to ensure all maintenance matters are addressed so that a very good, safe quality of accommodation is consistently maintained across the college campus.

National minimum standards

The college meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	2
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Outcomes for residential pupils	1
Quality of residential provision and care	2
Residential pupils' safety	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	2

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.



15 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of New College Worcester, Worcester, WR5 2JX

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleagues during our visit to your college.

- New College is a good residential school where you achieve well. The good residential provision, together with good education supports you in making outstanding progress in your independent living skills and mobility.
- The college is not outstanding because, although some of you make outstanding progress, some of you could be given more challenge in lessons so that you can learn more. I have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to be actively engaged in activities as you were in the best lessons observed during the inspection. I believe this will help you develop better skills for explaining your own ideas and your ability to solve problems for yourselves. You can help by rising to this challenge and being keen to participate.
- The education and residential staff support you well and effectively help you to raise your aspirations and have a positive view of your own abilities.
- You are also very supportive of one another and behave well. Most of you told us that you feel safe at the college and are confident to share your views and any concerns. All of your parents and carers told us they felt you feel safe.
- You have a good choice of subjects to study and good social opportunities are promoted during residential time.
- Leaders continue to help to improve the college and recent changes to governance have helped this. It is pleasing that many of you are involved in creating development plans and ensuring equality and diversity are promoted across the college.
- I have asked the headteacher to continue to improve quality assurance arrangements and evaluation including the day to day maintenance of accommodation and safe storage and recording of administration of medication.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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