

# WESC Foundation

WESC Foundation,, Topsham Road, Countess Wear, EXETER, EX2 6HA

<b>Inspection dates</b>	05/03/2013 to 07/03/2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding. Relationships between staff across the service are excellent. They work very effectively as a team to enable residential pupils to achieved excellent outcomes.
- There is a positive sense of community across the whole school. On-going developments in the way staff are deployed, which includes generic job titles, have led to a more holistic approach which has positively impacted on staff motivation but also in sustaining outstanding outcomes for young people.
- Learners report that they feel safe, valued and consulted. They feel they benefit enormously from their residential experience. Specifically, young people said they felt their confidence had improved, they felt more independent and enjoyed spending social time with friends.
- Safeguarding arrangements are well established, robust and known to staff. Staff receive excellent training and named senior staff take lead responsibility for child protection. The school provides a highly specialised service and staff have an excellent recognition of the diverse needs and vulnerabilities of all young people.
- A particularly strong feature of the school is its preparation of young people for independent living. Learners have wide ranging opportunities to develop their skills and confidence in several areas of life as they prepare for transition, including work experience.
- Another outstanding feature of the service is the excellent support provided by the therapeutic and nursing services. Individual and diverse needs are fully assessed and young people receive very personalised care and support.
- The boarding provision is very well managed and is very much valued as an intrinsic part of the school's function.
- Managers and staff are highly motivated and committed to the continuing improvement

of the service, including the promotion of equality and diversity. Young people are provided with a positive and nurturing environment in which they are supported to meet their personal challenges and realise their full potential.

- All national minimum standards are met and many are exceeded.
- Three areas of improvement were identified during this inspection which will enable the service to further improve its quality of provision. These relate to evidencing how consultation with young people influences improvements, providing more details about the nature of direct contact with young people during an intervention and formalising any safeguarding considerations due to adult residential learners sharing the same campus.

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

## Information about this inspection

This is a full annual welfare inspection.

## Inspection team

Norma Welsby

Lead social care inspector

Guy Mammatt

Social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

WESC Foundation is situated in Exeter, Devon. It is a non-maintained residential special school for children and young people of both genders, who have visual impairments. The majority of children and young people have additional complex physical, learning or emotional needs.

There are almost 100 children and young people on the roll in both the school and the college. The age range of children and young people is five to 22 years. There are flexible boarding arrangements in place, from one to four nights each week, to meet individual needs. Provision for young adults aged 18-22 years is inspected by the Care Quality Commission.

The school provides a range of health services on site, including a 24 hour nursing and specialised therapy services. The residential accommodation and educational facilities are all on one 16 acre site. Residential accommodation is in several separate buildings. Some units have facilities and adaptations to meet the needs of young people with physical disabilities.

The residential provision was last inspected in January 2012.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Evidence what action is taken in response to consultation with young people.
- Provide full details of the hold used in the physical intervention record.
- Formalise any safeguarding implications of adult learners sharing the same site as children and young people.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for residential learners are outstanding. Learners benefit from a well managed and integrated residential provision. Staff are highly motivated and young people benefit from the excellent relationships they enjoy with staff across the service. There is a strong sense of community and young people feel valued and safe. Their residential experience compliments their learning and young people are supported to achieve a wide range of personal targets that equips them for life as they mature into young adults.

Residential learners speak incredibly well of the staff who support them. They feel they can talk to them openly and will receive a positive and helpful response. Young people are consulted regularly. They feel listened to and feel they can influence change and improvements. For example, in one residential house young people had requested that they had more opportunities to eat together after school in their house, rather than using the central resource. Staff had responded to this suggestion and during the inspection young people were observed to be enjoying the benefit of these opportunities that they had influenced. However, records of consultation with young people do not always evidence action taken and how young people have influenced improvements.

There is a very strong sense that young people really benefit from staff being aspirational about their potential. This is apparent from the early assessment and admission stage, through personal target setting, to transitional arrangements that are put in place at every key stage in learners lives. For example young people benefit from being supported to take assessed risks, which helps them grow in confidence and develop skills to help them succeed in future challenges. The annual Ten Tors expedition is a good example and many learners have succeeded in this challenge. Learners also have opportunities to explore a variety of work experiences, through the school's own community based shops, but also through the wide network of organisations with which the school has established links. Some former learners are now employees, providing really positive role models and confirmation to current learners that personal aspirations are achievable.

Residential learners benefit from being supported to achieve healthy lifestyles. Excellent attention is given to addressing complex health needs, through the school's own therapeutic and nursing services. Learners are also given lots of opportunities to develop their awareness of their own health and wellbeing through regular group and one to one sessions covering diverse areas such as puberty and emerging sexuality, healthy relationships, substance abuse and how to seek additional help and support beyond the school.

Young people also enjoy a nutritional diet that is tailored to meet their individual dietary needs. They benefit from a staff approach that aims to promote their independence at mealtimes. Excellent attention is given to encouraging healthy meal choices and there is always salad, fresh fruit and vegetable on offer. Young people are also encouraged to participate in a wide variety of daily physical activities such as walking and cycling in the grounds, dancing and using the on site gym and swimming pool. Lots of community opportunities are also provided such as trips to the beach and horse riding.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of care and residential provision is outstanding. Staff are highly trained and motivated to deliver very high standards of care, while also being mindful of opportunities to make continual improvements. The staff team across the whole school, made up of education, care, therapeutic and nursing staff work together effectively to provide a holistic approach to meeting individual needs. Staff pursue a wide range of training, including specialist training, in areas such as autism,

which helps them to improve their practice as they respond to the increasingly diverse needs of young people.

In a recent parental survey conducted by the school, 100% of parents said they felt that their child was safe and well cared for.

Prospective learners are thoroughly assessed prior to being offered a place at the school. Their admission process is individually tailored to meet their needs and excellent support is given to ensuring they settle well in the residential provision. Similarly, a very comprehensive and tailored approach is taken as learners approach key transitional stages in their lives. When learners leave, staff work enthusiastically to equip young people with the skills they will need to make a success of their new venture. They also liaise very closely and provide comprehensive written information to promote consistency of support.

Care planning is very thorough and child-centred. Individual targets are set and regularly monitored and plans are dynamic, reflecting progress made by each individual and newly identified targets. Many residential learners have complex health needs and the school's broad complement of specialist staff ensure that needs are thoroughly addressed to enable young people to continue as effectively as possible in their day to day lives. In addition, a wide variety of environmental adaptations and specialist facilities are also in place to support independence. For example, these include 'talking menus', electronic doors and height adjustable kitchen facilities.

The management and administration of medication is robust, with appropriate quality and safety checks in place. The school also has excellent arrangements for the care of anyone who is poorly as there is access to 24 hour nursing care and local GP support. A 'hospital passport' is being introduced with red, amber and green areas highlighted to ensure key information is communicated effectively to hospital staff should a young person need to attend or be admitted.

Residential learners enjoy good quality accommodation provided in separate on site houses. Excellent consideration is given to issues of compatibility and suitable staffing. The environments are comfortable, light and well equipped. All young people have their own single bedroom, regardless of the number of nights they reside. Bedrooms are personalised, reflecting individual interests and tastes.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Outstanding**

The promotion of safety is outstanding. Residential learners feel safe and protected. They confirmed to the inspectors that they felt safe and well supported and had a range of people they could contact if they were concerned about any aspect of their wellbeing.

There are robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that learner's safety is prioritised. The local authority designated officer conducts annual reviews of these policies and the services practices. The most recent report of November 2012 reported: 'The designated staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and are continually striving to improve. They regularly attend the local authority safeguarding forum and contact local authority safeguarding for support and advice if necessary.'

The school has a detailed behaviour management policy. Learners are aware of how they are expected to behave. For example, they are expected to show respect, be tolerant and value differences. Staff lead by example and all observations throughout the inspection confirmed these principles are followed in practice. Staff are skilled in de-escalation techniques and work with young people in a positive and restorative way. Physical interventions are used infrequently and as a last resort to protect learners or staff from injury. While records are generally detailed they

do not always provide a full explanation of the specific hold used, although this information may be detailed elsewhere in the individual's behaviour strategy plan.

Residential learners report that bullying is not prevalent. There is a very healthy awareness amongst staff of the importance of maintaining vigilance. Learners are also given lots of information about bullying through informative notices and through regular discussions.

There are very thorough procedures in place for the safe recruitment and vetting of staff. Three references are required and telephone verification of referees is also carried out. These thorough practices support the view that learners are protected from unsuitable members of staff being employed. Accordingly, due diligence is also given to vetting and monitoring visitors to the school. While consideration has been given to the fact that adult residential learners are also accommodated on site and appropriate supervision of children and young people is on-going, a more formal approach to any safeguarding implications has not yet been fully implemented.

Residential accommodation provides a safe and secure environment for residential learners to enjoy their evenings. A comprehensive approach is taken to risk assessment, maintenance and repairs. All equipment, including specialist equipment, is properly maintained and serviced. Staff and learners have regular opportunities to take part in fire safety procedures.

### **Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding**

Leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. On going developments have led to continued improvements in the effective working practices across residential, therapeutic, nursing and education staff. This is benefitting staff and learners alike. Staff feel valued and are highly motivated and young people further benefit from a more seamless service.

The school has clear aims and objectives. The residential provision is highly valued and seen as an integral part of the school's functions. There is a strong commitment to equality and diversity, both through the highly individualised care of young people but also in its promotion of equal opportunities and valuing all staff roles. For example, many forward thinking family friendly ideas are being considered to value staff and improve staff retention, such as computers being provided in staff rooms so staff can order their shopping on line during their breaks, as it is recognised that shift working puts extra strain on families.

Staffing levels are based on individual assessment of the young people they are supporting. Staff are designated to specific houses and work consistently with the same young people, both within the houses and also in the classroom. Staff recruitment and retention is felt to have improved by recent changes in shift patterns and by deploying staff across the service. Staff feel well supported through individual supervision, annual appraisal, staff meetings and on going training. Many staff were particularly positive about training opportunities that they have.

Complaints are managed effectively and are well recorded.

The management team has a robust approach to quality monitoring and evaluation. An independent consultant undertakes a detailed monitoring visit every six months and as required under Standard 20, an independent monitoring review is carried out every half term. The service has a good track record and through its development plan demonstrates a clear commitment to further improvements.

All required policies and records are in place, are of a high standard and held securely.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113652
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC022223
<b>DfE registration number</b>	878/7081

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Tracy De Bernhardt Dunkin
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	25/01/2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 454 200
<b>Email address</b>	info@westengland.ac.uk

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