

WESC Foundation

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

Inspection dates	28/11/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good. Staff across the service work effectively together to enable residential pupils achieve outstanding outcomes.
- Learners thoroughly enjoy their learning experience and feel they achieve great benefit. For example they make personal progress through life enhancing experiences and a range of social opportunities that results in improved confidence and self worth.
- This residential school provides a very specialised service. Learners benefit from a very positive, nurturing and enabling environment. Individual needs are fully assessed and all young people receive highly personalised care.
- Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough and well established. Named senior staff take lead responsibility for child protection. Residential learners said they felt safe and well supported.
- All national minimum standards are met and many are exceeded. Three areas of improvement were identified during this inspection. These relate to: more robust and clearer records of incidents, including any physical restraints, providing a more balanced approach at independent monitoring visits and ensuring that specific ethical issues are given full consideration.

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

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 seven 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 March 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review recording systems in relation to incidents and physical restraints.
- Ensure all independent monitoring visits are balanced and contribute to the services' robust quality monitoring processes.
- Ensure that specific ethical issues are fully understood and given full consideration.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential learners are outstanding. Their individual needs are really well addressed, which enables them to develop their potential and enjoy experiences equal to their peers. Residential learners enjoy exceptionally good quality relationships with staff and they feel valued and respected.

Residential learners thoroughly enjoy their boarding experience. One commented; 'I love it here. It is great.' They are able to make a significant contribution to the service and knowing this improves confidence and self worth. Young people benefit from the really strong sense of community that exists. They feel safe and nurtured, while also feeling challenged to achieve personal goals. Residential learners confirm that they have a range of people they can talk to or ask help from, including teachers, carers and nurses.

At this school, residential learners benefit significantly from a staff team who are highly aspirational about their individual potential. Their residential experience compliments their learning as they develop their confidence and skills as they mature into young adults and prepare for transition.

Residential learners make excellent progress in achieving healthy lifestyles. Excellent attention is given to enhancing their understanding of and commitment to pursuing healthy relationships, healthy eating and regular physical exercise. For example young people are benefiting from regular opportunities to discuss personal relationship issues. They are also having increased opportunities to plan and cook healthy meals and are engaging in personalised fitness programmes.

The positive experience learners have at this residential school prepares them extremely well for their next stage in life. They leave equipped with the skills, confidence and resilience needed to be as independent as possible and gain further successes in education and employment.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision and individual care it affords, has a significant impact on residential learners' lives and opportunities. Their personal, social, cultural and educational development is enhanced by their residential experience.

Care planning is very thorough, personalised and child-centred. Learners are highly consulted, engaged and empowered throughout the process. Each young person has personal targets that are regularly reviewed and developed. Where appropriate individuals have a detailed health plan and behaviour support plan. A 'hospital passport' is used whenever learners attend hospital to ensure all pertinent information is communicated effectively.

Medication is appropriately managed and administered. Risk assessment are undertaken and wherever possible residential learners are supported to understand and self manage all or part of their own medication. Regular quality checks are in place and all staff with responsibility for handling medication have to pass a rigorous assessment of their competence, which is refreshed periodically.

The residential accommodation is provided in a number of dwellings located across the school site. All of the residential accommodation is of a good standard with some being of an exceptionally high quality. A very careful and considered assessment is undertaken to ensure a compatible mix of residential learners in each house. All young people have their own single

bedroom, regardless of the number of their overnight stays. Bedrooms are very comfortable and highly personalised. Each residential house is suitably adapted to meet a diverse range of individual needs, including: electronic doors, accessible kitchen and bathroom facilities and equipment, the clever use of contrasting colour schemes and specialist audio equipment, such as 'talking menus'. Such high environmental specifications supports independence and enhances the quality of learners' residential experience.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

There are robust safeguarding policy and procedures in place. Residential learners confirm they feel safe and protected and that they have a range of people they can contact, both external and internal, should they have any concerns about their personal welfare.

The school has a number of designated senior staff who take lead responsibility for safeguarding matters. All visitors to the school are given details of who these staff are and contact numbers should they identify any concerns during their visit. Senior staff take prompt and thorough action to protect learners as soon as concerns arise. They have an excellent track record in liaising with external professionals. For example, close working links are maintained with the local authority designated officer and the head of care always notifies Ofsted of issues arising and outcomes following investigation.

Particularly good emphasis is placed on helping young people develop their own broader awareness of how they conduct themselves in their day-to-day lives and the impact of behaviour on their own personal safety and well-being. For example, excellent attention is given to raising awareness about bullying, including cyber bullying and how young people can establish healthy relationships and good sexual health awareness. Equally good work is done to promote equality and tolerance and to encourage young people to value diversity.

Positive behaviour is really well supported. Staff work effectively to de-escalate incidents and enable young people to learn to self manage their own emotional responses and behaviour. Staff know and understand the needs of individual's extremely well. Through detailed assessment and a multi-professional approach, staff have a range of individually identified strategies in place which are used to manage behaviour in a nurturing and consistent way. While staff are very skilled in such practices, associated records relating to such incidents, whether or not they involve physical restraint (used minimally) are not of an equal standard. While some improvements to these have taken place since the last inspection, ways to make more sustained improvements were explored during this inspection.

Thorough procedures are in place for the safe recruitment and vetting of staff. Electronic records are maintained which are comprehensive and well organised and which evidence that these robust procedures are carried out in practice. Any volunteer workers undergo the same thorough checks as employed staff. All manner of visitors to the service are also appropriately vetted and supervised. These practices support the view that residential learners at this school are well protected.

The residential accommodation provides a very safe, well maintained and suitably adapted environment. Residential learners enjoy spacious and light accommodation that meets their needs, supports their independence and promotes their safety. Risk assessments and servicing arrangements are in place and both staff and residential learners have regular opportunities to practice fire safety procedures.

Leadership and management of the residential provision **Good**

This is a very well managed residential provision. Senior staff across the school are dynamic and aspirational for the future of the service and for all of the learners. The residential provision is highly valued and seen as a core element of the school's functions.

The school demonstrates a clear commitment to achieving further improvements. For example, since the last inspection continued improvements in the close working practices between school and residential staff, have benefited residential learners who receive a more seamless service.

Staff feel really well supported in their roles. They enjoy working in designated houses with residential learners who they get to know really well. They receive regular supervision and have opportunities to attend a range of meetings where they can make a positive contribution. Staff also feel they are well trained and have on going opportunities to benefit from a wide range of training, from both internal and external training sources.

All required records, policies and procedures are in place. Generally these are of an exceptionally high standard and are reviewed at appropriate intervals. Minor shortfalls exist where some records are not of a consistently good standard and where these have not been identified promptly through management oversight. Also, while all staff support residential learners extremely well, responding to a range of very complex needs, not all staff are fully aware of seldom used policies and procedures..

Independent monitoring visits take place regularly. In many respects these are very thorough and are highly valued by the senior staff who act promptly and thoroughly on all findings. However, emphasis during these visits is not always fairly balanced, which means some areas, such as monitoring of records is not given enough attention to really make a significant contribution to the school's internal quality monitoring processes in this area.

The promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. Staff provide positive role models and demonstrate values such as positive engagement, respect and tolerance to residential learners. Staff engage enthusiastically with young people who are clear about how they are expected to behave and treat each other.

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

Unique reference number	113652
Social care unique reference number	SC022223
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Ms Tracy De Bernhardt Dunkin
Date of previous boarding inspection	05/03/2013
Telephone number	01392 454 200
Email address	info@westengland.ac.uk

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