

New College Worcester

Whittington Road, Worcester, WR5 2JX

Inspection dates 22–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and other leaders are highly ambitious for the future of the school. Supported by the trustees, they have improved provision through effective training and regular monitoring of teaching. This has led to improvements in students' learning.
- Members of the Board of Trustees have a wide range of skills that they use well to hold the school to account. They manage the budget effectively, ensuring that disadvantaged students achieve as well as their peers.
- Parents are pleased with their children's progress. They say their children are happy at school and in the residence.
- Students across the school achieve well in English and mathematics, because these are consistently well taught and opportunities to apply the skills learnt are promoted well in other subjects.
- Improvements to the range of subjects offered and the new assessment system ensure that work is increasingly well matched to students' needs and abilities and set at just the right level of difficulty.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. This, alongside the careful attention to developing students' self help, mobility and independence means that their personal development is particularly strong.
- Students behave well in the school. They say they feel safe at school and during their trips and visits.
- Teaching is typically good. Strong relationships and well-planned tasks engage students well.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students gain a range of good qualifications.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Until recently the way in which the school has checked on pupils' achievements has not tracked their progress well enough over time. As a result a few students were entered for examinations that were not suitable for them to achieve well in.
- Students in the residence who have made complaints are not always clear as to what has happened as a result.
- A minor health and safety issue is identified in relation to the sick bay.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons, many of them jointly with the senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors also listened to some pupils reading with Braille.
- The inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair of the Board of Trustees and members of the school council.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and pupils' work.
- The inspectors took account of the 21 parent and carer responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View). The 25 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Best	Additional Inspector
Andy Hewston	Social Care Inspector
Jo Stephenson	Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school caters for students who have visual impairments, including a high proportion who are registered as blind. All students have a statement of special educational needs. A small proportion has additional needs to their visual impairment, including autistic spectrum disorders, physical difficulties or hearing impairment.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage. About a fifth are from a range of ethnic backgrounds including Pakistani, African or other British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is less than 10%. This is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by a local authority. The school receives this funding for some but not all of the students who are eligible.
- The school does not receive any other additional funding such as catch-up funding for Year 7.
- No alternative off-site training provision is used for the sixth form or for other students.
- Students come from all parts of the country and almost all are boarders. The vast majority of students are funded by their local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievements to outstanding by ensuring that information gathered through the assessment and tracking is used even more effectively
 - by all teachers and in all subjects to set work at the right level of difficulty and to identify the right qualifications for each student to achieve their best
 - by leaders to check on the performance of groups so that interventions can be swift should any group or student be falling behind.
- In the residence, ensure that when students do make complaints they are always kept in touch with what is happening about theirs and responses to complaints made are consistently thorough.
- Ensure carpeting is removed from within the school sickbay to promote a more healthy environment.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, other staff and the board of trustees has ensured that all students receive a good education and enjoy their time at school, through good leadership of teaching and careful attention to improving the school's work. As a result, the achievement of all groups is at least good.
- Leaders ensure that students who use Braille make good progress in Braille by providing regular training for staff and pupils. This results in these students quickly becoming confident users of Braille and promotes their reading, writing and mathematics skills and their achievement in other subjects well. Leaders make sure that students who do not use Braille have the technological aids and other specialist resources they need so that they too make at least good progress in their reading and writing skills and in other subjects.
- Leaders, including the board of trustees, have an accurate view of the school's performance. They model high quality professional standards in their work and have created a culture of high expectations for all students and staff. Everyone at the school and in the residence is fully committed to improving students' achievement and personal development. Leaders and teachers work hard to develop new and interesting ways to engage students. As a result students respond well and lessons are calm and productive.
- The leadership of the residence is outstanding because of the ways in which students' care and individualised programmes are highly focused on their personal development, independence and next steps. The work of the residence and students' improvements in these areas are monitored rigorously. As a result all elements of its work are outstanding.
- A strong and trusted residential management team is in place. Care practices develop and respond to students' needs, due to thorough monitoring and effective communication across the school site. Staff are well trained and supported within thoughtful training programme and well organised supervision. Regular monitoring by governors ensures that all residential records and care are scrutinised to further improve practice. However the carpet in the sick bay requires removal.
- Procedures for setting targets for teachers are fully established and leaders ensure that salary increases are not awarded until teachers have met targets based on pupils' progress. Staff training is well targeted to support this. As a result students' achievement and teaching are improving well.
- An effective range of subjects engages students well and ensures that they enjoy learning, as well as supports their specialist needs such as mobility and independence. This all contributes well to students' academic achievements, their physical skills and their personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The experiences offered in school and in the residence support British values and contribute well to students' preparation for life in modern Britain. Together, these aspects promote students' good behaviour and outstanding awareness of safety.
- Until very recently the system for checking students' progress did not enable leaders to identify examination routes accurately enough for all students. The system did not check on the performance of groups swiftly enough to identify underachievement. As a result, in the past, a few students have not taken courses or examinations that allowed them to achieve their full potential and their GCSE achievement reflected this in 2013. A new assessment system from September accurately checks students' achievement as they move through the school. It is not yet used consistently well by teachers. This is why leadership and management are not outstanding.
- The school does not receive the additional pupil premium funding for all eligible students. Nevertheless leaders provide additional support for all these students so that any student falling behind is quickly supported to improve. Disadvantaged students now achieve as well as their classmates in English and mathematics, and sometimes better.

- Parents are pleased with the school and those who responded to the on-line questionnaire said that their children are happy at school and in the residence. The school works well in partnership with families through regular telephone and email contact and through regular parent/pupil meetings.
- Partnerships with other schools are very effective leading to shared experiences for students. For example there are regular joint expeditions with students from Kings College, a local independent school to places such as Iceland. This has enabled students to broaden their friendships and experiences. Careers advice and guidance for the students' futures is good, resulting in almost all students going on to higher education and courses of their choice.
- Community links are very strong ensuring that students from the school are frequent visitors to local shops and places of entertainment. There are some opportunities for older students to undertake work experience in local shops. They volunteer to raise funds for different charities and these activities support their independence, confidence and mobility.
- Equality of opportunity is ensured for all students at the school through the study of different faiths and cultures and there is no discrimination of any kind. All groups of students achieve equally well, including those who have autism spectrum disorders or hearing impairment. These students benefit from appropriate resources to support their individual needs, such as additional technological aids and carefully thought out behaviour management programmes.
- The school and residence are rigorous in ensuring all safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. Leaders have ensured the school's procedures for keeping students' safe and secure are outstanding because staff are well trained in identifying students at risk of harm and systems are followed meticulously. Staff carefully assess risk when taking students outside of the school grounds.
- **The governance of the school:**
Governance is supportive and helpful. Members of the Board of Trustees provide good support and challenge to leaders. Several are relatively new to their roles but have received training and now challenge leaders well. Members are fully involved in checking on teaching and behaviour and look carefully at how well students are doing. Members know what is working well and what still needs improving. They have a good range of skills and expertise regarding visual impairment which they use to the benefit of the school. They understand the data and compare it with other similar schools. Frequent checks and regular headteacher reports enable members to have an accurate view of school effectiveness. Good management of finances means that any additional funding is used to improve the learning of those students for whom it is intended so that they achieve at least as well as their class-mates, and sometimes better. Members ensure that the best teachers and staff are rewarded. They understand the process of setting targets for teachers well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. This is evident in and around the school. School documentation is thorough and any incidents are regularly recorded. Students' good behaviour and strong attitudes to learning are promoted well by the good range of relevant learning experiences for all groups and consistent approaches to behaviour management.
- Students' good behaviour is also promoted by positive relationships with staff and between students. There are some marked improvements in behaviour over time for individual students. Students say that they really enjoy school. Those who have histories of poor behaviour prior to attending the school, improve their behaviour well. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years and fixed term exclusions are very rare. Learning behaviour is good in school and in the residence. Students are keen to succeed and they are eager to please their teachers.
- Students told the inspectors that there is sometimes some bullying or teasing but that staff quickly deal with it to keep them safe. A few staff, and a few parents agree that there is a very small amount of bullying at the school. Inspection findings agree with students' view that, when reported, staff deal with

the occasional instances of bullying very effectively.

- Students' personal development is promoted very well because of the positive support that they receive and the exciting activities they experience in the school and in the residence.
- Effective provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students includes good quality links with other schools. Pupils understand right and wrong and there is a balanced approach to pupils' broadly Christian religious education which encompasses world faiths. This was very evident as students joined in with singing during an assembly. Pupils benefit from high quality mobility training so that they gain good independence skills. Students for example, were pleased to guide the inspectors around the school.
- Students are prepared well for their lives after leaving school through their good progress and the range of qualifications that they gain. The high focus placed on improving their personal skills ensures that most have the confidence to take on challenges and look forward to their futures.
- Students in the sixth form behave well in lessons and in their free time and act as good advocates and role models for all students, showing a deep understanding of others' needs and points of view.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Rigorous health and safety policies and procedures, as well as very well qualified staff ensure that pupils' safety needs are extremely well met. Residential students thoroughly enjoy being in residence. They state that they always feel safe and very well cared for by the staff team.
- Personal safety skills are a key feature of the school and residential provision ensuring that each student has full understanding of risk and knows how to deal with it. For example students were observed learning to make hot drinks safely, preparing them extremely well for their futures. Students are very aware of personal risk and of their own needs when to ask for help and how to safely do this.
- Those in the sixth form are exceptionally safe and secure in their accommodation. They told inspectors that they feel safe and said that staff are ever vigilant and always ready to support them. They know about staying safe on the internet and in the community and have an excellent understanding of their own personal needs.
- High quality risk assessments ensure that all students' individual needs are fully taken into account for any activity in the school or residence and on any visits.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Students make good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics because teaching over time is consistently good. School records show that teaching is improving because of high quality training and rigorous checks by leaders.
- Good teaching enables all groups of students to make good or better progress. Expectations in lessons are high, ensuring that students deepen their knowledge in order to make good progress in their subjects and in their key skills such as in literacy, numeracy and use of Braille. This is because of the many opportunities provided by teachers for students to practice these skills. Year 8 for example showed very effective progress in information and communication technology linked to mathematics tasks. Students were highly creative and significantly challenged by the work set to design a musical birthday card.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. Additional support is readily available for any student who requires it. Students make good progress in all aspects of learning because of the very strong focus on literacy through the teaching of Braille, the ready availability of large print and other technological support available as appropriate for pupils. Staff's high level of expertise in these areas has a very positive impact on students' individual achievements.

- Students' work is regularly checked and marked through very strong verbal feedback during lessons. This is always helpful, giving examples of how pupils can improve their skills and what they could try next time and is particularly a strength in English and mathematics.
- Students with additional needs benefit from skilled daily support by teaching assistants who ensure that they fully understand their tasks and know what is expected of them. As a result these students make similarly good progress to their classmates, and sometimes better progress. The most able benefit from the high level of support available and the strong subject knowledge of staff. This means they are challenged constantly to take their learning further.
- Teachers' use of information held about students' current and past achievements and progress has been less consistent until recently. Teachers' individual knowledge of the students they teach is strong and therefore students have continued to make good progress throughout the school as they know their students' needs and next steps well. However a few students have been entered for examinations at the wrong qualification level in the past. Current evidence shows this has been dealt with swiftly by leaders through rigorous monitoring and checking on tracking, but not all teachers are using the new ways of tracking to a consistently high level to shape students' programmes of work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment on entry is wide ranging but usually below that expected for their age. For some students this is because of their specific learning needs, and for others because of some past underachievement. However, once at the school they quickly begin to catch-up. Their progress across year groups in a wide range of subjects is rapid. Evidence from books and from the school's own records shows that students achieve well and sometimes better during their time at the school. This is because learning in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is usually now well matched to the needs and abilities of the students.
- The number of students in each cohort is small. Nevertheless they achieve well in their GCSE's and A level examinations with the majority regularly achieving good GCSE and A level passes. In the most recent examinations outcomes at GCSE show that in English literature, languages, home economics and humanities, students' achievement at the higher levels was similar to, or better than other students nationally. In mathematics students' achievement was close to other students nationally. Examination of student work and student's current achievement levels show students in Year 11 and throughout the school to be making good and occasionally better progress because of the very individualised support they receive.
- All groups of students, including those who receive additional funding, those who have additional sensory or physical difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders and those from different ethnic backgrounds, achieve equally well. Students with additional special educational needs receive effective support to enable them to work alongside their classmates. They make good progress because of the additional expertise provided for them. For example, students benefit from working individually with staff to improve their reading, writing and mathematics skills, including support for homework in the residence. Students said that the extra help they receive from residential staff helps them to do better in their homework.
- In the past there have been a few occasions where students have not met their full potential in their final examinations because a few were entered for qualifications that were too difficult for them. The tracking of students' progress over time was not being used effectively to shape every students' programme and identify courses and qualifications through which they could achieve their best. However the current system for assessment and checking on teachers' use of this has already improved the ways in which this is done.
- Students' speaking and listening skills are particularly well developed and good compared with others of their age. This is because of the high importance placed on students talking aloud in class and presenting to others. The vast majority are confident speakers who listen very well and enjoy engaging visitors in conversation.

- The progress of disadvantaged students is similar to, and sometimes better than, that of other students in the school. As a result the gap between these students and others on entry are closing. This is because of high levels of additional support enabling them to catch-up quickly, particularly in their use of Braille or their use of technology.
- The most able students achieve particularly well in English and mathematics because of skilled teaching and additional homework that encourages them to achieve their very best. They are very well set up because of this to achieve highly in other subjects and individual students regularly achieve the highest National grades at GCSE and at A level, showing at least good progress from their starting points. As a result the majority of students move from the sixth form to the University of their choice.
- Students' sports skills are promoted well through the schools' own large swimming pool and other high quality sporting activities within the school and community and nationally. For example several ex-students took part in the Paralympics and received medals for their successes.
- A very large majority of students in the sixth form achieve well and make good progress. Those who take AS examinations early do well and benefit from additional time in their final year to improve their results further. A very few have not achieved quite as well in the past because they were entered for courses that were too easy or too difficult.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form is good. Leaders have an accurate view of the sixth form and ensure that students' progress is at least good. Teaching is good. It takes good account of the ages of the students and the ways in which they need to be supported towards next steps.
- About half of all sixth formers enter the sixth form from other schools with accurate assessments of their abilities. Those without these assessments courses and examinations that are not appropriate to their needs, prior achievement and individual abilities. A revised tracking and assessment system is already improving the assessment of students' achievement and needs on entry. This means the match of courses to students' needs and abilities has also improved.
- Relationships between students and staff are good. Staff are proud of their students and keen for them to do well. Students are well supported in lessons and in their free time. Staff are friendly and students know that there is always someone to talk to.
- The sixth form curriculum ensures that students have good opportunities to learn about the wider world and to gain confidence in managing their visual impairment. They have regular trips, for example, into the local area and wider afield.
- Achievement in English and mathematics is good because of the high focus placed on these areas. Students in the sixth form make good progress and almost all go on to college or university, or take up vocational opportunities.
- Students' behaviour is good and they clearly enjoy their sixth form experience. They say that they feel safe when they are out and about in the community and on their various work-placements. They demonstrate a very strong awareness of personal risk and of how to minimise this, because these issues are explored well with them by staff in the residence and school.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good because the curriculum is highly relevant to students' specialist needs and provides a good range of courses for students. Opportunities to learn about the wider world are very good, preparing them well for the futures.
- Vocational studies include enterprise opportunities such as organising coffee mornings for staff and visitors. This helps to improve students' social skills as well as their independence, planning and self help skills.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	are outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	is outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is outstanding

- Promoting students' personal development and independence is a central part of the ethos of residence. Staff are ever vigilant for ways in which to promote these and this ensures that residential students' outcomes are outstanding. For example they improve their mobility and independent living skills hugely and consequently their confidence and self esteem. Inspectors agree with staff, parents, social workers and students that the residential experience promotes students' personal development extremely well.
- Residential planning is highly individualised for each student and gives a clear picture of the expected levels of care. Developmental targets are identified carefully through regular reviews and are agreed by the residential students as well as the care and educational staff teams. This ensures there is a consistent approach to a student's care and to expect improvement at all times over the whole school site.
- Robust health planning and medication administration supports the health of residential students. Staff are well trained and extremely knowledgeable in the medical needs of the students, and how to respond to these. Effective links to health professionals both within the school, and externally, promote and develop students' well-being. This is supported by a considered menu that is responsive to different needs and diets.
- The residential environment is comfortable and updated on a rolling basis. Adaptations are made in response to meet specific needs and improve their access to home life. Residential students are proud of their rooms and state that they feel at home at the school. However old carpeting in the sick bay could cause infections.
- Senior students are proud of their improved independence skills, learning to cook and care for themselves as well as looking after their environment. They know that these will support them very well in the next steps of their life.
- Residential students are consistently listened to, through regular house meetings and individual key working sessions. They state that 'there is always someone to talk to, if you have any problems the staff will try to sort it out'.
- Students are aware of their ability to raise concerns if they are unhappy about an area of their care or school life. Complaints are thoroughly investigated although responses are not consistently thorough. A few students said that they do not know about the outcomes of their complaints.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/Residential provision		
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	117064
Social care unique reference number	SC37775
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	448059

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	Special
School category	Non-maintained
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	76
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	40
Number of boarders on roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diana Fulbrook
Headteacher	Mardy Smith
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2012
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