

WESC Foundation

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

Inspection dates	10/02/2015 to 12/02/2015	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
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 collaborative working across teams provide a complete service of care, education and therapeutic support. Residential learners benefit from the waking day curriculum to make good progress in their personal development. Excellent facilities and specialist equipment enable residential learners to be active participants in their education and leisure time.
- Effective leadership and management is striving for improvement. Significant changes have occurred in the structure of residential provision to support the delivery of improved outcomes. Involvement in research and new technologies ensure that this specialist provision can support residential learners to achieve and have great aspirations.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Leaders and managers work well as a team and with other agencies to keep residential learners safe. Risk management effectively balances safety with opportunity to challenge any barriers posed by disability.
- Sensitive and well-planned transitions occur. Residential learners feel safe and supported; they are able to develop at a pace that suits them. Residential learners enjoy their experience at this school and identify with being a member of this Foundation.
- All the national minimum standards are met. Points for improvement refer to care plans, emergency evacuation plans and clinical supervision for nursing staff.

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 inspection was announced at 09:00 on 10 February 2015 and commenced five hours later. Inspection activities included discussions with residential pupils, the school council, the head of care, the deputy principal, senior leaders, care staff, the therapeutic team, nursing staff, catering staff and a trustee. Key documents and policies were reviewed. Meals were sampled with pupils and a tour undertaken of the residential accommodation and school facilities. There were no Ofsted survey responses from residential pupils, staff or entries on Parent View.

Inspection team

Clare Davies

Lead social care inspector

Jennifer Reed

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

WESC Foundation is situated in Exeter, Devon. It is a specialist provision for children and young adults with visual impairment and often additional complex needs. The Foundation provides residential care and education for learners from the age of nine to 27 years.

There are approximately 60 learners on roll in both the school and the college. The residential accommodation for learners under the age of 18 years is predominantly located in two houses for those 16 years and under. This provision offers flexible boarding arrangements from one to four nights each week during term time. Post 16 years, learners are accommodated in other buildings on site to represent a college environment. A 52 week provision for young adults also forms part of the Foundation and is inspected by the Care Quality Commission.

The school provides a range of health 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 November 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ensure that detailed care plans reflect the care delivered and are reviewed for effectiveness
- arrange for nursing staff to receive clinical supervision
- produce detailed Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for each residential learner.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential learners are outstanding. They benefit from extremely positive relationships with experienced and committed staff members who promote a 'can do' attitude. Residential learners gain in confidence as they learn new skills and find encouragement to try new things. An extensive range of technology is available to support them with their visual impairment and other disabilities. Residential learners benefit from this school embracing new initiatives and its involvement in research and development for people with visual impairment.

Through the use of many alternative methods of communication, including the use of electronic communication aids, residential learners are able to voice their opinion, share their views, make choices and influence the arrangements of the residential provision. Regular house meetings and a student council provide formal forums for consultation. Staff advocate well to ensure that residential learners are given access to social and leisure activities on a par with their peers. This is evident through participation in events such as the Ten Tors Challenge on Dartmoor, activities towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award and international trips.

Friendships are formed in the residential groups and across the school community. Residential learners report that they enjoy this school, they are very positive about their boarding experience and recognise the achievements they have made. Personal targets provide a focus on areas for development and no matter how small, success is celebrated with encouragement from the staff to reach another goal. For example, a residential learner with a limited food intake increased his choice with two new foods. The occupational therapist, care and education staff were thrilled to acknowledge this success and determined to set a new target.

Residential learners are supported in developing independence skills and are encouraged as much as possible to undertake day to day living and personal tasks. Independent skills are extended beyond the school campus and into the community through shopping, use of public transport and joining community based groups such as sports clubs. Retail shops for the Foundation provide work experience for older learners and an opportunity to develop social skills with customers. The on-site radio station broadcasts through the internet and many learners embrace this opportunity to take to the microphone, developing their confidence as they talk and play music of their choice. Another example how residential learners are not restricted through their disability.

The nursing staff and therapists deliver consistently high quality care to residential learners. The emphasis is on well-being, exercise and weight management. Residential learners receive excellent medical care and support to improve their health, independence, mobility and self-esteem. Collaborative working between care and education staff contributes to residential learners achieving outstanding outcomes.

A strength of this school is the management of transitions. Residential learners and their families benefit from sensitive arrangements on entry to the school and subsequent internal moves into another residential building and into post 16 education. Residential learners can stay at the Foundation until a young adult, accessing college and then supported on to supported living or another setting. This continuity of care is welcomed by many learners and their families.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of the residential provision is good. Residential learners benefit from sound pastoral support. Managers and staff understand the importance of transitions and are committed to ensure that the entry to the school is a positive experience. In-depth assessment confirms that the specific needs of each residential learner can be met by the skills of the multi-disciplinary

team on site. Induction into the school is sensitively planned at the child's pace and residential learners are often established day pupils before staying overnight at school.

Managers and staff place the wellbeing of residential learners at the centre of their practice, leading to good relationships where learners receive consistency in care and boundaries, enabling them to feel secure in their placement. Individual support is planned to meet the complex needs of residential learners. Many have additional disabilities to their visual impairment and a range of nursing and therapeutic support is allocated accordingly. Residential learners benefit from speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, music therapy, physiotherapy and access to other professionals such as a psychologist. Having such a team of specialists on site avoids residential learners having to travel for appointments and involves the integration of their therapeutic programmes throughout the waking day curriculum. Residential staff report how valuable it is for them to work alongside the therapists in order that they can continue to deliver the support beyond the direct sessions with therapists.

Written plans are produced for the therapy and care provided however, they are a collection of stand alone documents. Care plans for residential learners are variable in quality and do not fully reflect the care practices delivered. For example, staff are readily able to talk about what level of support each residential learner requires and what targets they are working towards, demonstrating a sound knowledge of the children and young people in their care. Such knowledge is not always translated in written care plans, the lack of a formal review by managers fails to monitor the effectiveness of care plans. This is an area for improvement; leaders and managers are in the process of making more effective use of the information management system in use across the school.

The residential provision offers an excellent range of activities for individuals and as a group. The school grounds and facilities offer an indoor swimming pool, bicycles and trikes, play areas, a hydrotherapy pool and trampolines. Sensory areas around the school such as, a garden, a studio, a play room and a dark room enhance the experiences for those with a visual impairment. A track provides a circuit for walking, running and cycling. Opportunities are provided for residential learners to challenge their disability and take part in activities and events alongside other children and young people.

Activity, exercise and healthy eating are promoted extremely well, a joined-up initiative across the school. For example, staff in care, education, therapy and catering are involved with the delivery of healthy living initiatives. The catering team enable residential learners to take part in National Breakfast Week and are encouraging learners to design a meal for the 'fuel for sport' campaign. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is delivered as part of the curriculum in both education and residential areas by a dedicated PHSE teacher.

Residential learners are supported in their mental and emotional wellbeing as they move into adolescence and explore the impact of their disabilities. This support can be through group work or at an individual level. Relationships and friendship groups are regularly discussed and learners receive support in managing these often emotionally charged situations. There are sound systems for the management of medication, overseen by qualified nurses. As such, parents are assured that their child is being cared for by competent, medically trained staff. A recent restructure has led to central line management of all nursing staff though this does not include clinical supervision. Leaders and managers are looking to secure this support from local health professionals.

Residential learners under the age of 16 years stay at school for one to four nights each week of the term. Two separate buildings provide this accommodation for boys and girls. Residential learners between 16 and 18 years of age are accommodated with older learners across the campus. The accommodation was built several years ago and there are no lifts to the first floor

areas. Sufficient rooms enable wheelchair users to be accommodated on the ground floors while residential learners with mobility use bedrooms upstairs. Each bedroom is personalised well to meet individual needs and residential learners reported how they like their rooms. Lounge and dining areas offer communal space where learners play, watch television, enjoy music and activities. Snacks and some meals are taken in the residential areas with most meals served in the school dining room, a short distance away.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

Safety within the residential provision is good. The school follows safer recruitment procedures, carrying out checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and young people. Safeguarding documents refer to the current government guidance and these are implemented through safer recruitment, training, safe working practices and staff code of conduct. All staff receive regular training on child protection and safeguarding matters, effectively supported by a team of designated staff who are trained to a higher level commensurate with their additional responsibilities.

Staff are very knowledgeable about the particular vulnerabilities of residential learners and any concern is noted and reported. Records confirm that appropriate referrals have been made to the local safeguarding team and school procedures have been followed to promote the safety of residential learners. The deputy principal is the lead person for safeguarding and meets regularly with key staff to review any concerns and identify if any further action is required. Thorough records are maintained and monitored to identify any patterns or trends.

Residential learners respond well to the structure and boundaries provided. Therapists work effectively together with care and education staff to create and review strategies in managing some challenging behaviours exhibited. During the inspection, residential learners were observed to be polite and well behaved, engaging with the inspection process and very welcoming to visitors. Records confirm that physical intervention is at a low level, a guide away from a situation and support to de-escalate successfully negates the need for physical restraint. Records are monitored to identify any increase in the use of physical intervention. Significant changes in behaviour prompt a multi-disciplinary meeting to be held to consider what care and support the learner requires, a good example of the joined-up provision.

There is a great emphasis on enabling learners to keep themselves safe. Care, education and therapy staff work together to support learners through the PSHE programme. This includes the safe use of social media, independence and appropriate social interaction with others. Open discussions are held about bullying to ensure such behaviour is reported. Residential learners have regular house meetings where safeguarding is a standing agenda item. As such, there is a forum to discuss fire safety, personal safety and any concerns they may have.

Matters of health and safety are routinely checked and repairs are promptly attended to. Fire safety is promoted by trained staff and regular tests of fire detection equipment. There is a fire risk assessment and evacuation procedures are well known by the staff. However, there is limited written guidance on how to support residential learners with emergency evacuation in the absence of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs). These written documents need to identify what arrangements are required to assist with evacuation in an emergency, taking into account each residential learner and their disability.

Overall, residential learners benefit from a safe environment and this has a positive impact on their welfare. Risk assessments relating to the accommodation and to trips and activities identify likely risks and how they can be reduced or eliminated. Resulting in an effective procedure without denying visually impaired learners the opportunity to take measured risks as part of their

growth and development.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

Since the last inspection there are new managers in post and a new structure across the Foundation. The deputy principal, responsible for service provision, has made a significant impact with her leadership through change management and development. The Principal and trustees are committed to raising standards and driving improvement to be a successful specialist provision. Improvement plans from three inspections in 2014 contribute to the overall development plan.

The new structure provides a management team with clear lines of accountability. The structure ensures that the residential provision is valued equally with education and therapeutic support. During the last six months there has been a review of budgets and expenditure, a review of residential staff considering their hours of work and their professional development. Consequently, a competency framework has been established to support residential staff through initial induction to professional qualifications linked to an escalating pay scale. This development work and consultation with staff is a move towards a more professional approach in social care. Throughout, managers and staff have maintained their focus on the residential learners.

Residential staff are enthusiastic about their work and report that they work well with staff in education and the therapy teams. They report that they feel supported in their role and receive relevant training. Communication has greatly improved and the staff welcome the weekly briefing issued by the Principal. Residential staff feel that they have been consulted about changes to their shift patterns however, there remains some anxieties about this change as they wait for this to be finalised.

A dedicated team reporting to the head of quality demonstrates the commitment of this organisation to monitor the quality of provision in order to improve performance. Reporting systems and analysis of data alert the senior leadership team of progress towards key priorities. An information management system used across the campus has greater capacity to incorporate more electronic records to move away from hand written documents. This is an area of development the school are working towards.

Trustees are actively involved in the monitoring and development of the residential provision. Trustees visit the accommodation and report on their findings. These visits have identified some minor issues to do with maintenance such as small repairs and to listen to the requests of the residential learners. In addition, the school invite an independent person to monitor the provision and act as a critical friend. Such a good level of scrutiny is another example of this service striving for improvement.

The school welcomes feedback and consults with parents, residential learners and other agencies through surveys and correspondence. The consultation findings contributes to the development plans for the residential provision and the wider Foundation. Parents are complimentary about this residential special school for their children as reported through the many positive letters and cards and the absence of any complaints since the last inspection. Parent View invited contributions towards this inspection however the response rate was less than ten and therefore not published.

This school is involved in research projects, new technology and has introduced a model of working with cortical visual impairment. The trustees and managers of this provision are striving to be leaders in their field of a specialist centre for visual impairment.

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	Independent Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	60
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	9 to 18
Headteacher	Ms Tracy De Bernhardt Dunkin
Date of previous boarding inspection	28/11/2013
Telephone number	01392 454 200
Email address	tracybd@wescfoundation.ac.uk

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