

New College Worcester

New College, 2 Whittington Road, Worcester WR5 2JX

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

New College Worcester is a non-maintained special school. It provides education and care for young people who are blind or partially sighted, who are aged between 11 and 19 years old. Young people can access the national curriculum and progress to study beyond age 16.

There are currently 67 young people on roll. Sixty young people stay in the residential provision on a termly or weekly basis.

While all young people have a visual impairment, some also have additional needs.

Young people stay in three residential houses and a hostel. All residential accommodation is located on campus.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 February 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 5 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- Managers do not always ensure that child protection referrals are made immediately.
- Records of safeguarding concerns are not detailed and are not used by managers to review and develop practice.
- Sleeping accommodation for young people is not consistently well organised and managed to minimise risks effectively.
- Records do not show how staff have acted on young people's views.
- Risk assessments are not always detailed and do not always result in appropriate action being taken to reduce risks to young people.
- Not all national minimum standards are met.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Young people are good ambassadors for themselves and the school.
- Young people feel listened to and have a strong voice.
- Staff have positive relationships with young people and are good role models.
- The residential service is a welcoming and vibrant place where young people develop a wide range of life and social skills.
- Staff support young people to have high aspirations and to achieve their full potential. There is a continual focus towards becoming an independent, successful adult.
- The board of governors and senior leadership team have a detailed strategic plan for developing the service in line with the emerging needs of young people.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for children. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and the findings acted upon to reduce risk for all children. Where children are aged 8 years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls. (National Minimum Standard 5.1)
- The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified. (National Minimum Standard 6.3)
- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to the guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges'. (National Minimum Standard 11.1)

This specifically relates to:

- the immediate referral of all safeguarding concerns to the local authority safeguarding team.
- clear records being maintained of all safeguarding concerns, the actions taken, and outcomes.
- the senior leadership team regularly reviewing all safeguarding concerns looking for patterns, trends and lessons that can be learned.
- The senior leadership team and board of governors taking any actions needed to ensure the ongoing safety and welfare of all young people.
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (National Minimum Standard 13.4)
- The school's leadership and management actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. (National Minimum Standard 13.5)

Recommendations

Ensure that there is evidence in writing of outcomes to any issues children raise in key-worker sessions, questionnaires and in-house minutes.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The vast majority of young people who stay in the residential provision enjoy positive experiences and make good progress from their starting points. However, in the last 15 months there have been three significant safeguarding incidents that the senior leadership team has not managed effectively. These incidents have had an adverse impact on four young people's progress and experiences.

Young people are consulted and their views are valued. The principal actively involves young people in discussions about a range of topics such as school rules, policies and procedures and the future development of the service. However, the quality of record-keeping is inconsistent. Records do not always evidence what action staff have taken in response to concerns that young people have raised or to the ideas that young people have put forward.

Staff develop professional, supportive relationships with young people. Each young person is provided with a package of care that is tailored to their needs. Staff help young people to overcome their inhibitions and anxieties and become more ambitious.

There is a strong emphasis on developing young people's independence. Consequently, young people make significant improvements in developing their self-confidence and skills in managing daily tasks. Independence plans ensure that progress is achievable and continual.

Young people lead healthy lifestyles. They become confident at managing their own medication and complex health needs. They have social lives, participating in a wide range of activities, clubs, weekend trips and holidays. They develop and sustain positive friendships. One young person stated, 'Before coming here I was isolated. I now have a wonderful group of true friends.'

Most young people make good educational progress. They learn new skills that support and enhance their learning and broaden their future education and employment opportunities. For example, 11 of the 14 school leavers at the end of the last academic year left to go university.

Young people are articulate. They are good ambassadors for the school and the wider visually impaired community. They participate in events run for potential new students and their families and welcome new students when they first start at the school. They act as positive role models and mentors to younger peers.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires

improvement to be good

The school has an up-to-date child protection policy and all staff are appropriately trained. Despite this, on a small number of occasions the senior leadership team and the designated safeguarding team have not followed their own policy and have failed to promptly refer serious child protection concerns to the local authority. This delay has prevented children from being provided with immediate support from external safeguarding professionals. Although the impact of this was reduced by staff offering support to young people, the lack of external oversight also resulted in young people's parents not being informed in a timely way. Professionals in the local authority had already brought this concern to the principal's attention prior to this inspection.

In response to these concerns, the principal took immediate action and reviewed staff practice. Although at an early stage, the review has already produced some positive changes. For example, two subsequent child protection concerns have been well managed and referred appropriately, ensuring the immediate safety and welfare of the children involved.

Residential staff know the young people well. Aside from the incidents noted above, they take appropriate action when concerns are identified. However, records are not all of a good quality and do not provide an effective account of the incident or the actions taken by staff. Managers and governors are not systematically reviewing these records to identify opportunities for learning and the development of practice.

When serious safeguarding incidents occur, the senior leadership team uses risk assessments to consider what actions need to be taken next. Until recently, these risk assessments have been too narrowly focused, only considering the impact of the specific incident on the young people involved. They have not been used to consider patterns, whether policies and procedures need to be reviewed, or whether physical changes are required to the school site or residential accommodation. The senior leadership team and board of governors have recently acknowledged these shortfalls and have implemented a detailed action plan to ensure that staff practice, student induction, the school's policies and the layout of the residential accommodation promote safe relationships between young people.

Positive relationships between staff and young people help them to explore a range of topics, feelings and behaviours safely. Young people described these conversations as 'invaluable'. As a result, they develop new skills in managing their emotions and functioning in a range of social situations. Any anti-social behaviour is quickly addressed through conversations and restorative practice.

There are several examples of residential staff working in partnership with other professionals to ensure the well-being of young people. For example, staff work alongside the school's nurse to monitor concerns about self-harm and poor diet

effectively.

Since the last inspection, there has been one occasion when a young person has gone missing from the school site. Staff were proactive and worked with the police and the young person's family to locate the young person and ensure his safe return.

Students like their residential accommodation. It is well maintained, comfortable and homely. There is an ongoing programme of decoration and refurbishment. For example, over the last 12 months new showers have been fitted throughout the residential accommodation, meeting the only recommendation from the previous inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The board of governors and senior leadership team have failed to identify when some national minimum standards have not been met. They also did not consider the wider lessons that could be learned following some serious child protection concerns. However, after receiving feedback from other professionals, they have now taken steps to ensure that young people are better protected. They have also devised a detailed action plan setting out further medium and long-term improvements in this area.

The board of governors and senior leadership team are passionate about the service and achieving positive outcomes for young people and are reflective about the improvements that need to be made. They have detailed strategic plans for the improvement and development of the wider service. They are engaging young people, staff and parents and consulting them about these developments.

Staff are positive about the support that they receive from managers. Staff performance is appraised on an annual basis and they receive regular, good-quality supervision. There is a comprehensive programme of staff training which involves the whole school. In addition, there are specialist courses that focus on the specific needs of the residential staff teams and the young people that they support.

The service continues to develop the skills of staff and the resources available to young people. For example, this year two residential managers have attended mental health first aid courses to become trainers. They are now delivering this to other staff. This training is part of a positive wider strategy to promote and meet young people's mental health needs.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC043048

Headteacher/teacher in charge: N Ross

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

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