

Inspection of Wesc Foundation School

Countess Wear, Exeter, Devon EX2 6HA

Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Since the previous inspection, school systems have become confused and weakened. This is so much so that the school is not providing an acceptable standard of education.

Recently, leaders have tried to improve how well the school keeps pupils safe. However, safeguarding is still not good enough. Leaders do not check with enough rigour that their new approaches are working.

Staff are caring. This helps pupils to feel secure while in the school. Pupils are kind to one another and show respect for staff. They have some interesting experiences. For example, the new sensory room is a stimulating space. Pupils can make sounds and lights move, with just a touch. Staff bring stories to life here. However, pupils' learning across the school and across subjects is not organised well. Sometimes, the expectations of what pupils can do are too low.

The new headteacher wants to make sure that learning is ambitious for pupils and that it helps them to be ready for life in the sighted world. Work has started on improving the curriculum. But there is still a lot to do. Plans for many subjects are not clear or well thought through.

Pupils' education and learning support plans are not drawn together well enough to meet their needs, support their behaviour effectively and prepare them for what comes next.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils could achieve much more than they do. Leaders have not made sure that staff bring together, and use, the information they gather. The teams that work to support pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are not co-ordinated well. Pupils' individual plans include some useful ideas that could help with behavioural, social or other needs. But, because the key points from the plans are not brought together, they can be missed. When this happens, pupils' needs are not met. For some, this means they have more behaviour incidents than they should.

Also, pupils have several targets provided by the different teams working to support them. This means that pupils and the staff around them are not working together on a common set of next steps. This does not help pupils to achieve well. Leaders are aware that improvements are needed. Work has started to bring teams together to improve how well targets help pupils to achieve more.

Leaders have ambitious plans to transform learning across the school. However, curriculum plans are in the earliest stages. For many subjects, such as music and physical education (PE), there are no whole-school curriculum plans. Leaders cannot be sure that pupils build knowledge in an organised, connected way. Leadership in

most subjects is also at an early stage. Leaders do not have a clear understanding of the learning that should take place across the school.

The curriculum for English is more developed, particularly for pupils on the 'pioneer' and 'endeavour' pathways. Some of these pupils work towards entry-level qualifications. But for pupils on the 'discovery' pathway, who often have more complex learning needs, their education, health and care plans form the curriculum. At times, this means that learning is not ambitious for pupils.

Teachers and support staff, known as enablers, form strong relationships with pupils. They help pupils to make the most of their lessons. Staff make good use of assistive technology. This involves pupils more with their learning. Parents and carers told us that their children come to school happily and that they feel well supported by staff.

The personal development of pupils is a stronger aspect of the school. It is not yet good, however, as the personal, health and social education (PSHE) curriculum is not yet fully and securely in place. For example, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, but this learning is not planned well enough to build pupils' understanding as they move through the school. Assemblies introduce pupils to the work of charities, world events and different cultures. Pupils experience a wide set of activities beyond the school day. These include bike club, wheelchair dancing, horse riding, choir and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Pupils have careers advice and work experience, both within the school and beyond. They enjoy these real-life experiences. Leaders are continuing to develop this aspect of the school's work. All pupils in recent years have gone on to supported learning of some sort.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Senior leaders and the trustees are not rigorous in checking that safeguarding arrangements are secure. Leaders have not shown that they can tackle weaknesses effectively.

Leaders have been working to improve procedures and practices to keep pupils safe. This has rightly been their recent main priority. The new safeguarding policy and the extra induction and training have made sure that staff understand how to recognise concerns. They know what to do when they have concerns.

However, we found that, despite this, safeguarding arrangements and the culture of safeguarding are not good enough. The new safeguarding leadership team has not established a clear way of working that all staff understand. Leaders are not organised or rigorous in their approach. They are not consistent about what to do when concerns are raised.

We found examples of unacceptable delays before seeking advice from specialist agencies. Delays like this could put pupils' safety at risk.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Despite being fully aware of the key weaknesses in safeguarding, leaders have not ensured that there is a strong enough safeguarding culture. Staff alert leaders to concerns, but leaders do not respond appropriately, effectively or quickly enough. Leaders, including the trustees, must urgently confront the confusion that exists about how to respond to safeguarding concerns.
- While senior leaders have a clear vision and model for how the curriculum can support pupils for their futures, this is not translated into a clear understanding for staff. Therefore, learning does not help pupils to build on their knowledge and to learn more over time. Curriculum leaders require support to understand the curriculum aims for their subject and to check that the curriculum is taught well.
- The various education and therapeutic teams that support pupils do not liaise well enough so that pupils have clear, well-understood and manageable plans. This does not help pupils to thrive. Leaders need to establish clear systems that align the different plans for each pupil and check the impact of these plans on pupils' educational, social and behavioural outcomes.
- The school has systemic weaknesses in the quality of education, leadership and management, and safeguarding. Current plans do not provide leaders, including trustees, with precise information to hold staff to account to secure improvement. Leaders need to be more rigorous in making sure staff are held to account and that improvements are made.
- It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	113652
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10119538
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christopher Knee
Headteacher	Matthew Smith
Website	www.wescfoundation.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 July 2017

Information about this school

- In January 2018, a new chief executive officer (CEO) was appointed by the trustees. A new headteacher, known as the head of education, took up his post in May 2019.
- Wesc Foundation School is a non-maintained special school for pupils with sight loss, situated in large grounds on the outskirts of Exeter. Many pupils also have additional needs alongside their sight loss. These include moderate or more complex learning needs.
- The board of trustees of the Wesc Foundation exercises its role as the appropriate authority.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. All are placed at the school by their local authorities.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. We sought to establish whether safeguarding is effective at the school.
- To inspect safeguarding, we scrutinised several school documents and met with members of the safeguarding team including the designated safeguarding lead. We also considered safeguarding training records and recruitment processes. We checked the school's single central record.
- We met with the chair of trustees and had several meetings with the headteacher and the CEO throughout the inspection. We also met with teachers and other staff.
- An inspector had a telephone call with a representative of Devon local authority. We took into account information provided by the local authority designated officer.
- We made telephone calls to some parents of pupils to gather their views.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: PE, PSHE, English and mathematics. This involved meeting with leaders and teachers, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracy French	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Hannon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stewart Gale	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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