

## WESC Foundation

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

# Assurance visit

## Information about this residential special school

WESC Foundation is a specialist school for children with a visual impairment. Children can attend school as a day pupil or stay on site in the residential provision.

**Visit dates:** 30 September to 1 October 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 4 to 6 July 2019

**Previous inspection judgement:** Inadequate

## Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

## **The care of children**

Children benefit from being cared for by staff who know them well and with whom they have built strong, trusting relationships. Good-quality care plans help ensure consistency of care by providing staff with clear guidance on how to meet the individual child's needs. These plans are frequently reviewed to ensure that they meet the child's identified and emerging needs.

Children are making good progress. They benefit from and enjoy their time in the residential provision. Children have improved their behaviours, communication skills and, for some, their access to the community. This view was supported by feedback from parents and professionals.

Children's physical, emotional and mental health needs are well catered for. As well as care staff, children have access to a team of nurses and therapists. The nurse manager provides effective training in developing staff knowledge of the medication children take. The nursing and therapy teams have been involved in upskilling staff, which has created a better understanding of each other's roles and developed staff's skills. Any medication errors are swiftly and robustly addressed.

During the pandemic, staff have been creative in maintaining their relationships with children and families. One event the children particularly enjoy is Chit Chat Thursday, when they are able to talk to other children on campus, children at home and staff virtually. This has been very successful and has also been used as an avenue through which to gather children's views. This event is in addition to the student council, which continues to meet virtually. The numbers of children taking part in the student council have increased. It remains an effective consultation forum.

Children have taken part in a range of fun activities. Even though the sponsored walk and Ten Tors event could not take place as planned, staff ensured that children did not miss out. Staff arranged for these events to take place on the school campus, much to everyone's delight, as they are highlights of the school year. Staff created WESCercise on-line fitness sessions, which children enjoyed.

## **The safety of children**

Safeguarding arrangements have improved and are now effectively protecting children. Safeguarding concerns are swiftly reported and well managed. This is evident in the comprehensive records of safeguarding events. Staff are well trained and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. To evaluate staff's safeguarding knowledge, regular quizzes are held, and the outcome of these is used to develop further training. Leaders and manager have increased their oversight and quality assurance of safeguarding matters. In addition to the work undertaken with staff, there has been a lot of work with children to develop their understanding of safeguarding and how to keep themselves safe in the real and virtual worlds.

Risk assessments are of a good quality, providing staff with up-to-date information on children, their vulnerabilities, their risks and strategies to mitigate these risks. Risk assessments are regularly updated and include information on the current pandemic. In addition, the school has a comprehensive campus pandemic risk assessment.

Behaviour is well managed. The disciplines across the campus share effective behaviour strategies, which prompts good consistency of care. Restraint is rarely used. There has been no restraint in the residential provision, but there has been some used during the education day. These have been appropriate and only used to keep children safe.

Safer recruitment practices are followed, which protect children from those who may wish to harm them.

### **Leaders and managers**

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school. They have a clear vision for the development of the service, which is supported by a detailed development plan. Leaders and managers are ambitious and excited about the future of the school. They have ensured that the actions from the monitoring visit have been met.

A new head of care has been recently appointed. She has extensive experience in residential work. The head of care has carried out a detailed review of the quality of care provided to aid in her development of the residential provision. This has provided her with clear overview of the strengths and areas for further development.

The monitoring, quality assurance and management oversight have improved. Representatives across the disciplines attend regular meetings to provide scrutiny and share and develop practice. In addition, leadership groups also meet to analyse, evaluate and drill down on any emerging patterns or trends so they can be addressed. Information from this process is used to further develop provision.

Staff receive good-quality training. Leaders and managers have been creative in the delivery of this training, considering the restrictions in place due to the pandemic. Leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the training provided to ensure that it meets the needs of the staff and the children they care for.

Staff receive good-quality supervision, which they feel helps them improve and develop their practice. Where needed, supervisors will challenge staff practice effectively in a supportive manner. Supervision records are detailed, reflective and supportive.

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

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## **Residential special school details**

**Unique reference number:** SC022223

**CEO:** Jane Bell

### **Inspector**

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

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