

# 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 children who are visionally impaired, who are aged between 11 and 19 years old. Children can access the national curriculum and progress to study beyond age 16. There are currently 75 children on roll. Sixty-seven children stay in the residential provision on a termly or weekly basis. While all children have a visual impairment, some also have additional needs. Accommodation is provided in five residential houses all located on campus.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 8 to 10 February 2022

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>inadequate</b>
---	-------------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
---	------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
---	------------

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

**Date of previous inspection:** 8 May 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Inspection judgements**

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

This inspection identified serious safeguarding concerns. Senior leaders have failed to take enough action to keep children safe. As a result, the judgement of how well children are helped and protected is inadequate. As this is a limiting judgement, the overall experience and progress of children and young people is therefore also inadequate.

Despite the serious shortfalls found during the inspection, children do have fun and make progress during their stays. Children shared their positive experiences of being with other children who also have a visual impairment. Some children state that they no longer feel alone and now have friendships for the first time. Children say that they now feel part of a community. As a result, their emotional well-being improves.

Children's level of independence improves over time. For example, a child who was previously scared to go out into the community is now confident to do so. The mobility team at the school helps children to achieve tailor-made goals that will support them into adulthood.

Staff's care of children was observed by inspectors to be warm, calm and reassuring. Children were seen to go to staff for cuddles and to give staff 'fist bumps'. Staff know children well and want the best for them. However, this is in contrast to the negative manner of some staff's terminology and recording, when staff are away from the children. This poor practice can give a false impression of staff's care and understanding of children's needs.

There is an excellent range of activities for children to enjoy both on and off the school site. This includes playing goalball, singing in the choir and taking part in running groups in the community. Children are encouraged to take part in the 'morning mile'. This helps children to lead healthier lifestyles.

Most parents feel supported and included. The senior leadership team has made improvements since the previous inspection to help parents feel more involved. Senior leaders have set up various groups and forums to allow this to happen. Parents told the inspectors that they feel communication is good, and one parent stated that their child had 'flourished' since joining the school and residency.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate**

There have been some serious safeguarding incidents since the last inspection. Care staff are alert and have raised concerns with the senior leaders. However, senior leaders have failed to take enough effective action to keep children safe.

Senior leaders failed to follow their own safeguarding policy when managing a serious safeguarding concern. They did not take prompt action to refer to external safeguarding professionals. In addition, they undertook their own investigation prior to any consultation with statutory agencies. Furthermore, senior leaders failed to demonstrate how they considered potential risks to determine if a member of staff could return to work with children. This comprised the safety of children.

Leaders cannot be certain that children are safe online when they are in their care. The school's internet system has appropriate safeguards to prevent children accessing unsafe content online. However, this same rigor is not applied to children who use their own data on their personal devices. Senior managers have not considered potential risks or how to minimise those. This is despite a serious incident occurring with regards online safety.

Risk management arrangements are poor and do not help staff to keep children safe. Managers do not ensure that staff have all the information they need to protect children. For example, not enough consideration is given to risks around children's emotional health and well-being, online safety or exploitation risks. Risk assessments are not sufficient, strategies are not effective and they are not always shared with other professionals. Despite managers identifying staff require training in risk assessments, this has not been completed or scheduled to take place. These concerns leave children at significant risk of harm.

Staff recruitment is not safe for all staff. The school uses overseas volunteers to complement their staff team. Senior leaders have failed to assure themselves that the same robust safe recruitment checks are applied to these overseas volunteers. As a result, children are at risk of being exposed to adults who may wish to cause them harm.

Some policies do not yet offer clear guidance for staff. For example, the missing from education policy does not make it clear what staff are to do if children go missing from the residential provision, or what actions staff are to take if children come back to residency later than agreed. Senior leaders have already identified that some policies require updating.

Although there have been no medication errors, staff do not always follow the procedures in place.

The houses are suitably furnished. However, an inspector identified one fire door that had a hole in it that has not been picked up in health and safety checks. This could have compromised the fire door's effectiveness in the event of a fire. This was quickly addressed during the inspection.

There are many shortfalls in how senior leaders keep children safe. However, there are also positive examples where staff have worked with other agencies and raised challenges where necessary.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

Since the previous inspection, the head of care has resigned from their role. They were replaced by a new head of care whose role now overarches education and the residential provision. The whole senior leadership team has undergone a restructure of roles. This is aimed at helping both education and residential to work more closely together and to have a greater oversight of all children's well-being.

Senior leaders are aware of some of their areas of strengths and areas for development. However, there are a number of new strategies that are being introduced that are taking time to embed. Furthermore, senior leaders' plans have failed to identify many of the serious shortfalls found in this inspection.

The residence's recording systems are not effective in helping senior leaders to fully understand children's experiences. For example, although sanctions given to children are low in number, they are not overseen by the senior team. The team has failed to acknowledge that those sanctions are not always appropriate or helpful for the child to help them change their behaviours.

The quality of staff supervision varies. Staff do not always feel that they benefit from the supervision of their practice that they are provided with. Some supervision records lack any action points or helpful detail. This is an area that senior managers are already aware of and have plans in place to help improve this.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the availability of school and residence staff. Staff have worked hard, and have worked long shifts to try and help keep the residential houses open. This shows their ongoing commitment to children.

There is a new independent visitor. The reports from her visits are detailed and are helping to make some of the necessary changes. For example, staff are rewriting children's care plans to make them clearer on how to care for the children.

Two staff are yet to be enrolled onto the necessary level 3 qualification. This shortfall was also raised at the previous inspection.

## **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:

- Children's physical, emotional and social development needs are promoted. (NMS 3.1)
- The school has effective links with health agencies, including specialist services where appropriate, such as child and adolescent mental health services and sexual health services. The availability of such services is taken into account when considering admissions. (NMS 3.4)
- The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell, and ensures that children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Handling of Medicines in Social Care). (NMS 3.6)
- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured. (NMS 6.2)
- 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. (NMS 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 any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 11.1)
- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (NMS 12.6)
- Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy, and where relevant the local authority's policy, in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with the police where appropriate. (12.8)
- The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. (NMS 13.3)

- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (NMS 13.4)
- The school's leadership and management actively promote the well-being of pupils. (NMS 13.5)
- Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 14.1)
- All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment. (NMS 19.2)

## **Recommendations**

- Ensure that staff supervisions help staff to improve their practice and that good quality notes are made.
- Ensure that staff understand the impact of the terminology they use in regard to the care of children.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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:** Nicola Ross

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01905 763933

**Email address:** nross@ncw.co.uk

## **Inspectors**

Louise Battersby, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

Nicola Lownds, Regulatory Inspection Manager

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022