

New College Worcester

New College, 2 Whittington Road, Worcester WR5 2JX

Inspection dates

27/04/2022 to 28/04/2022

Context of the inspection

This monitoring visit focused on the progress made since the full inspection of the residential aspect of the school. The education aspect of the school has been inspected separately and a report will be published to outline these findings.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

Leaders and managers are still in the very early stages of implementing their action plan. As a result, many of the shortfalls identified at the full inspection remain. This means that some children remain at risk of harm.

Current risk management strategies to help to keep children safe remain poor. Staff do not have clear guidance on all the known risks to children and the actions they must take to keep children safe. Risk assessments are ineffective as they do not include the relevant information from specialist agencies, such as mental health services. As a result, there is varied understanding from the care staff about how to keep the children safe. Furthermore, it is unclear if staff are consistently following the risk strategies that are in place. For example, some children require staff to 'check in on them' to help to keep them safe. However, it is unclear if these checks are always taking place.

Staff recently received training on how to write an effective risk assessment. However, new risk assessments are yet to be written following this training. This means leaders are unable to evaluate the impact of this training and if staff are better skilled to understand risk strategies required to keep children safe.

Seniors leaders continue to develop practice in how they keep children safe online. Staff have completed training and partnership working with parents, in regard to how to keep their children safe online, has started to improve since the previous inspection. However, this work is not yet fully developed and some staff remain unclear about their role in how to protect children online.

Since the last inspection, there has been one allegation relating to an adult who worked at the residency and in the school. This has been shared with other professionals and

investigated. However, there have been other occasions when children have shared concerns and senior leaders have failed to take appropriate or prompt action to ensure children are safeguarded. This demonstrates that senior leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities do still not fully understand their roles and responsibilities to safeguard children.

Senior leaders conducted audits on most of the staff recruitment files following the last inspection. Although improvements have been made, an inspector sampled one file that still had unexplored gaps in the employment history. This means there is the ongoing risk that someone unsuitable may be able to work with children.

The residential houses continue to be developed. One house has a new seating area outside for children to enjoy. However, shortfalls were again identified in regard to fire safety. For example, an inspector identified two fire doors where parts of the intumescent fire door seals were missing. Leaders had identified this in their own health and safety checks but it had not been quickly addressed. This could have compromised the fire doors' effectiveness in the event of a fire. This was quickly addressed during the inspection.

Some policies still require updating. Senior leaders have started this review but at the time of the inspection this was still ongoing.

There has been one sanction recorded since the last inspection. Leaders and managers have not reviewed this sanction to assess its appropriateness to help the child learn from their behaviour. Failure to assess sanctions was a shortfall at the previous inspection.

Staff benefit from training on how to deliver effective supervision. As a result, the quality of supervisions and the records are starting to improve.

Staff still feel motivated and supported. They feel involved in the further development of the service and want to get things right.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 3.1 Children's physical, emotional and social development needs are promoted.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.6 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 wellbeing 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).

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 11.1 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.
- 12.6 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.
- 12.8 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.
- 13.3 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.5 The school's leadership and management actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
- 14.1 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.
- 19.2 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.

Inspection team

Louise Battersby

Lead Social Care Inspector

Debbie Bond

Social Care Inspector

Information about this school

New College Worcester is a non-maintained special school. It provides education and care for children aged between 11 and 19 years who are visually impaired. 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. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2022.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117064 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC043048 |

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 boarding schools.

The inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

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| Type of school | Residential special school |
| Number of boarders on roll | 75 |
| Gender of boarders | Mixed |
| Age range of boarders | 11 to 19 |
| Headteacher | Nicola Ross |
| Date of previous boarding inspection | 08/02/2022 |
| Telephone number | 01905 763933 |
| Email address | nross@ncw.co.uk |

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