

Inspection of New College Worcester (NMSS)

Whittington Road, Worcester, Worcestershire WR5 2JX

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

At New College Worcester, adults really care about the pupils and want them all to achieve their potential. Pupils trust the staff and appreciate all the support they receive. However, aspects of the school's work to keep pupils safe are not good enough. This means pupils are potentially at risk of harm.

There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on academic achievement, maximising independence and preparing pupils for their future lives. When pupils leave school, they all go on to further employment, training or education. Many go to university. Most achieve independent lives in their communities.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Behaviour in class and around the school is very positive. Pupils are kind and friendly. They take the time to introduce themselves to visitors and make them feel welcome. Bullying is rare. Leaders investigate all reported incidents of bullying and act when needed.

There is an impressive range of opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. These include a choir, swimming, horse-riding and lots more. There is an extended school day so that pupils can make the most of these activities. They say that these opportunities make a 'real difference' to their lives.

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

The school has high expectations of pupils' academic achievement. Pupils receive effective support from their teachers. They benefit from a good quality of education. However, there are serious failings in safeguarding. Systems for the quality assurance of safeguarding are weak. In addition, risk assessment for pupils who are known to be at risk of harm are not strong enough. Leaders have identified these weaknesses but have not yet implemented their plans to put them right. Furthermore, those responsible for safeguarding do not always respond effectively when staff raise concerns about pupils' well-being.

The school's curriculum is ambitious. Leaders have designed a curriculum to ensure that pupils develop academically and personally. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 study a core curriculum that includes all subjects in the national curriculum. In addition, as part of the specialist visual impairment curriculum, pupils learn concepts and skills that prepare them to live independently and contribute to their communities. For example, new pupils learn how to find their way around the school independently. As pupils' skills develop and they become more confident, the curriculum extends so that pupils learn to travel further afield and use public transport.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a strong commitment to the aims of the curriculum. During the pandemic, they took immediate action to ensure all pupils could study the curriculum remotely.

In the sixth form, leaders have designed a curriculum that aims to allow students to have the skills to succeed in life. Staff get to know students very well. They listen to students' aspirations. As a result, students in the sixth form study and complete courses and activities that closely match their ambitions. Some students, for instance, do regular work experience to prepare them for their next steps.

Subject leaders plan subjects logically to build pupils' knowledge step by step. For instance, in modern foreign languages, pupils' knowledge of how sentences are constructed is built up over time. This logical order is also applied to other subjects and helps build pupils' confidence in a range of subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They know how to teach their subjects well. During lessons, teachers ask lots of questions to check pupils' understanding. This regular checking means that teachers quickly spot gaps in pupils' knowledge. They also know when pupils need extra help. In addition, teachers are experts in teaching pupils with visual impairments. They routinely adapt teaching materials so that all pupils can learn the curriculum. For example, in music, teachers modify the resources pupils use to learn how to read music. Teachers use tactile graphic scores for some pupils, while braille music is used for other pupils. These adaptations support pupils to achieve well.

Leaders promote reading well. The school library is well stocked and inviting. It includes a variety of high-quality materials for different reading abilities. Pupils spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about the books they are currently reading.

The school environment is calm and orderly. During breaktime and lunchtime, pupils of different ages socialise well together. They chat maturely and sensibly. Staff are alert to any pupils who are on their own and quickly ensure they are included. During lessons, pupils work hard and listen carefully to their teachers. Laughter and friendly interactions between staff and pupils are commonplace. Sixth-form students take their learning seriously. They are committed to their education and study hard outside of lessons.

Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about age-appropriate healthy relationships as part of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. In addition, leaders give pupils opportunities to understand how to be responsible and respectful citizens. Pupils, for instance, are currently helping to develop a new behaviour policy and rewards system.

Leaders are mindful of staff's workload. Staff appreciate this. Morale is high, and staff enjoy working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders ensure that staff know how to recognise the signs of abuse. Staff know the

systems for when to report concerns. However, leaders have not ensured that staff consistently report their concerns with appropriate detail. This means leaders do not always have a complete picture of safeguarding concerns. In addition, those responsible for safeguarding do not always respond effectively to concerns raised by staff. Some pupils, for instance, do not get the help they need quickly enough. This puts pupils at potential risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is too much variability in how safeguarding concerns are reported and actioned. This means leaders do not always have a complete picture of safeguarding concerns. Leaders need to urgently implement their plans to ensure that they can identify and challenge poor-quality safeguarding practices.
- Those with responsibility for safeguarding do not always respond effectively to concerns raised by staff members. This means that some pupils do not get the right support in a timely fashion. Leaders need to ensure that they consistently take swift and appropriate action to support pupils who need help.
- Risk assessments for pupils who are known to be at risk of harm are not strong enough. This means these pupils are at risk of potential harm. Leaders need to ensure that their assessments of risk adequately address why the pupil is at risk and that they share risk assessments with all relevant staff members and external agencies.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 are the school and you are 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	117064
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10230238
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Diana Fulbrook
Principal	Nicola Ross
Website	www.ncw.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have visual impairments, including a high proportion who are registered as blind. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Pupils who attend the school come from all parts of the country. The vast majority of pupils are boarders.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with representatives of governance, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: music, languages and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with some pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included: school policies, safeguarding records, curriculum plans, pupils' attendance records and pupils' behaviour records.
- Through discussions with leaders, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. An inspector also looked at documents related to safeguarding, including the school's single central record of checks on staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of different classes and at different times of the day. They talked to pupils informally about bullying, behaviour and welfare.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Christopher Stevens, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chris Pollitt

Her Majesty's Inspector

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