

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 aged between 11 and 19 years who are vision impaired and may also have additional needs. Children can access the national curriculum and progress to study beyond age 16.

The school can accommodate 75 boarders. Most children stay in the residential provision on a termly or weekly basis.. Accommodation is provided in five residential houses, all located on campus.

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 July 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children spoken to talk positively about living at the school. They say they can make friends, something they previously struggled with. Children say they like the independence living there brings, for example, being able to get around the campus unaccompanied and, after passing an assessment, being able to walk independently to the local shops. Children also said they liked the variety of activities available to them. As a result, children develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Staff are dedicated to improving the experiences and progress of children. For example, staff help children learn to cook, make drinks, do their laundry, shopping, develop self-care skills and get around unaided. These skills help to prepare children for adult life. However, records do not always show how staff consistently support children with their plans. This omission could mean some children are not progressing as well as they could be.

Children are given a voice. Staff give children many opportunities to express their views. However, records do not always show how requests are responded to. One child had been asking for a fan for his room. Despite asking, he told the inspector he still had not been given one. This could mean children stop making requests because they do not feel listened to.

Children get many social opportunities at the school and in the community. Staff take children on holidays and to places of interest. Children attend the local running club, Guides and judo club. Staff have arranged for children to have end-of-year events such as celebration days and leavers' proms. As a result, children can make friends with others in the local community and enjoy events and activities as any other child would.

The houses children stay in are individualised and personalised. Children spoken to say they like the house they are in, like the staff and overall feel everyone gets on with each other. Inspectors observed children engaging well with each other and helping each other out when needed.

Parents are complimentary about the care given. Some children do not stay overnight at the school. However, they are fully involved in what is happening and are included in after-school activities. This means children who do stay at the school can maintain friendships.

Staff help children, not just while they are at the school, but also when they are at home. Staff have helped children where necessary to rebuild their relationships with their families by providing a plan and resources, so that families and children can share activities. As a result, those children who felt separate from their families now feel a sense of belonging.

When children leave New College Worcester at the end of their time in education many will return home to their families. Families then help them to move to the next stages of their lives. However, for some this is not possible. Staff have supported children well with transitions, making sure they are fully involved in all the plans. Staff have advocated for children and have helped support the transition. As a result, when children move on from the school they are as well prepared as possible and supported to settle in their new homes.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Leaders have made many changes to improve the overall quality of care given to children. As a result, their safeguarding practices are much improved. One parent spoken to felt safeguarding had improved.

Leaders have prioritised reviewing children's risk assessments and the school's policies and procedures. For some children who may need more help in managing risks, leaders have introduced safety plans. However, not all risk assessments or safety plans have been reviewed and new information added. For example, when a child made a serious disclosure about an incident which happened at home, this was not added to their plan. For another child, the risk level was unclear. The level of risk appeared high but was judged low. This could mean those caring for children may not fully understand children's risks or how best to help children stay safe.

Leaders have improved the way incidents are reported and followed up. There is a clear trail of action taken and better information-sharing with house parents. As a result, everyone knows what action has been taken and children's safety has improved.

New systems have been put in place to monitor and safeguard children online. This has been shown to be effective, when it highlighted a child trying to access sites which would not be appropriate. Leaders are also making sure all children receive age-appropriate advice and guidance about online safety. For older children, the local police have visited to talk about the risks to children online. As a result, children have greater awareness of safety and the school is taking online safety seriously.

Children display excellent behaviours during their stays. Staff understand each student's individual cues and give clear but gentle reminders about expected behaviours. As a result, children have not needed to be held to keep them safe, no children have gone missing and there have been no concerns around bullying.

Leaders have reviewed the policy relating to children going missing so that it is much clearer as to the action staff need to take in the unlikely event children were to go missing from the school.

Leaders have reviewed the safer recruitment procedures, including those for overseas volunteers. This procedure is now much more robust. As a result, leaders

are much more confident that those adults working with and caring for children are appropriate to do so.

Leaders have introduced improved monitoring systems for the environment. The previous shortfalls in health and safety were no longer evident. The living areas seen were well maintained and suitable for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders have been proactive in reviewing and reflecting on the shortfalls identified at the previous inspections. They have developed new monitoring systems, however, these are still in their infancy.

Leaders have made some improvements but there are still some shortfalls. For example, leaders have not made sure all risk assessments and safety plans are updated regularly, especially when new information comes to light. These omissions could result in some children still being at risk.

Leaders have arranged a variety of training for staff. Staff spoken to welcome the focus on their learning and development. However, records do not clearly show which staff have completed what training, when it was completed or when refreshers are due. Consequently, leaders cannot be confident all staff have had the required training, which could mean they do not have all the skills and knowledge they need.

Leaders have made sure staff now receive regular supervision. Staff say they feel well supported by leaders and records show a greater focus on staff reflecting on their practice.

The governors are passionate about New College Worcester and that children have the best possible care. They regularly undertake visits and monitoring of the residential provision. They provide support to the headteacher and challenge to leaders at the school. As a result, this is driving up the quality of care given to children.

The independent visitor provides good oversight and feedback to leaders. They have also given additional support and guidance to help leaders develop children's plans. As a result, there is greater consistency in documentation and plans are much clearer for staff. This helps staff provide consistent care to the children.

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:

- 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. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 6.3)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.4)
- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 19.1)

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

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Inspectors

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Dave Carrigan, Social Care Inspector

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