



# RNIB New College, Worcester

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117064  
**LEA** Worcestershire  
**Inspection number** 279978  
**Inspection dates** 18 October 2005 to 19 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Patricia Potheary RISP

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Whittington Road
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special		Worcester
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		Worcestershire WR5 2JX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01905 763933
<b>Number on roll</b>	96	<b>Fax number</b>	01905769100
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Ian Fell
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Mardy Smith

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 18 October 2005 - 19 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 279978
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

## **Description of the school**

New College, Worcester (NCW) is a non-maintained secondary residential special school for 108 students. All but two of the 74 students currently on the roll are boarders and 39 are in the sixth form. As a selective comprehensive for students with visual impairment (VI), NCW is unique, serving students from all over the UK and abroad. The school has DfES specialist status and is in the process of separating from the RNIB.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

New College, Worcester (NCW) is a delightful and highly effective school which transforms the lives and future prospects of the students who attend. NCW provides an outstanding education, which is a view shared by the school. It provides excellent value for money. Parents are very pleased with the way their children gain confidence and independence and, often for the first time, do well with their studies. Students think that this is the best school they have been to and appreciate the way they are helped to learn. They think lessons are the most enjoyable part of being at the college. Every aspect of NCW contributes to students' outstanding achievements in their personal development and academic subjects. This includes good teaching, an exceptionally good curriculum, outstanding levels of care and highly specialised and successful approaches to helping students with visual impairment (VI). The personalised and detailed approach to providing for each student individually is particularly successful. Leadership and management are good and, through several recent developments, demonstrate they can sustain continued improvement. The acting principal and acting vice principal do not yet have the right information to ensure that different groups of students all do as well as they possibly can.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form is also outstanding, offering a unique and very high quality service to the students. The college's evaluation matches this view. Students gain very good qualifications in a wide range of subjects and so win places at the university or college of their choice on the courses that interest them most. The sixth form is the largest part of NCW and its strengths and weaknesses mirror those of the main school. One sixth form student, in discussion, summed up NCW's exceptionally flexible approach to helping them realise their ambitions as the 'Worcester Attitude'.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The overall quality of boarding provision is good. The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in January 2005 found that it met national minimum standards in all major respects. The provision and accommodation have some shortcomings but most of these are already being tackled. Leadership and management of the residences are good and staff, in close liaison with the school, are highly committed to the well-being of students. The quality of the boarding experience exceeds the national minimum standard in the way it supports students' education, their personal development and enjoyment. The Ofsted inspectors found that the experience of boarding contributes significantly to the way students are able to socialise, gain independence and become more mobile in the community. Many students miss being at home, but really enjoy having friends around them and lots of things to do.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Monitor and analyse trends in progress for different groups of students so that specific areas for improvement can be targeted more closely.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Students make outstanding progress and achieve very well. They arrive at the college, including into the sixth form, with average or below average attainment. Many have had negative experiences of school and low self-esteem. By the time they leave NCW, their achievement has improved significantly and, in all age groups, they have made much faster progress than the majority of mainstream students of similar age. Standards at the age of 16 are higher than average when compared with all schools nationally. Those who leave at 16 years gain good qualifications and go on to interesting and challenging placements in further education. In the sixth form, most students gain at least four AS and three A levels each and almost all go on to university, including Oxford this year, to study for a wide range of degrees. This exceptional progress is achieved because the school adopts a very effective personalised learning programme for every student, carefully tracks their success, sets them challenging targets and teaches them well. Students with learning difficulties additional to their visual impairment achieve well as a result of the specific help they receive for these.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Students are a pleasure to meet. They are confident, articulate and very mature in their attitudes. Before students arrive at the college, they have usually experienced difficulties in making friends, being independent and getting the right help with their studies. All this changes at NCW.

The college and the residences work very effectively together to encourage students to look after themselves and each other. They learn to move around and travel with confidence, cook and do their own laundry. Universities comment that students from NCW are better able to look after themselves than other students. Students contribute in lots of ways to the school community, but also give their help locally, for example in advising on visual access in other schools and colleges. They are helped to lead healthy lives and take part in a very good range of sports and other exercise. They do not yet all choose to eat healthy food, although there is a fair choice, and the school is working towards the Healthy Schools Award to improve this. Students are well aware of how to stay safe when travelling or working with dangerous substances and equipment. The behaviour of students is excellent. They enjoy learning, rating it as the best aspect of NCW and their attendance is good. They value highly the future opportunities provided by educational success, and work very hard to achieve this. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students debate the subtleties of moral or cultural issues at a sophisticated level. Spiritual and

multi-cultural development is promoted well through regular assemblies, celebrations of festivals and religious education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good overall, and is sometimes outstanding. Students make exceptional progress in learning because the curriculum is so well tailored to their individual needs and they receive personalised feedback to help them improve. Teachers have very high expectations and very good knowledge of their subjects; they are enthusiastic and students clearly enjoy what they are taught. Specialised resources including Braille text and tactile number boards are used very well in helping students understand the lesson. Some lessons lack attractive or colourful visual aids, which could enliven the presentation for a few. Lessons such as science and physical education are taught skilfully and imaginatively to enable students to gain a wide range of practical experience. The small size of groups and the way courses and lessons are made relevant to individual students contributes significantly to the high standards achieved. Classrooms are generally well organised but some rooms are too cluttered to be comfortable, largely due to lack of storage. Homework is very well organised and is supported successfully by the residential care staff.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. It is very well organised to meet the different needs of every student, which is a major reason why they do so well. The range of courses offered in the sixth form is particularly wide. The increased variety of courses now meets the needs of less academic students more effectively. To ensure quality is maintained, the school always employs subject specialists and then trains them in using techniques suitable for visually impaired students.

An extensive programme prepares students for the world of work. Some vocational education, such as plumbing, is offered at a local college. Students from NCW have a higher employment rate on leaving education than is average for those with visual impairment from mainstream schools.

The richness of the curriculum means that students can enjoy developing skills in many areas, increasing their sense of self-worth and their opportunities to take part in later life. There is, for example, an exciting variety of musical, theatrical, and leisure activities, such as white-water rafting and archery. Students from NCW also compete at national and international levels in sport. Students have satisfactory opportunities to join in with their peers in the local community, which the school is seeking to improve.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

Students are very well cared for and all statutory requirements are met. Students trained by 'Childline' act as listeners to others and they all know what to do if they do not feel safe. Students and their parents feel that NCW is a safe and supportive place to be.

Students receive exceptionally good advice and guidance about their progress, what they need to do to improve and what choices to make. Students respond exceptionally well and know where they are going with their learning and what to improve. Their own views are taken very seriously. Links between the college and the residences are very well organised so that continuity of provision for care, independent living skills, and coursework requirements is secure. Students' academic and personal progress is monitored and reviewed very regularly. They receive very good advice on their future options with very careful preparation to ensure transition to university or college if successful.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are good. They are particularly successful in ensuring outstanding outcomes for students. Until separation from the RNIB is resolved, the leadership team is one member short and financial planning is compromised. The acting principal and vice principal have been successfully leading improvement during this uncertain period. This has required considerable skill and dedication, particularly as they are so new in their role, and they show good capacity to take the college forward.

The main weakness is that self-evaluation is very good at improving provision but does not pinpoint exactly where standards need to be raised. The small number of students in each year group and lack of meaningful national comparative data does make this difficult, however. Senior and middle managers are not evaluative enough at a whole-college level, when analysing data, to set specific targets for raising standards further. Work with individual students means that their progress is rapid and sustained, but it is not clear whether particular groups of students could do even better. The result of this is that subject teachers lack the information necessary to know whether the targets set ensure suitable challenge for every type of student. The college and governors have already identified this as their key area for improvement.

Students and their parents are involved in evaluating the work of the college and are quite clear about how their equality of opportunity has been transformed for the better. Staff recruitment is very effective in keeping standards high, and professional development is good. The range of specialist resources, including the buildings, is very good. There is careful financial management and value for money is excellent. Good work with other schools and colleges increases students' opportunities to learn elsewhere. Governance is satisfactory rather than good because governors' roles

currently cannot be clarified and developed. The governing body meets all its statutory responsibilities.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	3
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so helpful and welcoming to us when we visited your college. We enjoyed the time we spent with you very much. We can see why you find NCW such a good place to learn. We also enjoyed meeting the staff and joining you for lunch and some of your lessons.

What we liked most about your college:

- How much you learn and what exceptionally good progress you make in eventually gaining such good qualifications.
- How much you contribute to the way the school is run.
- The mature way you behave, help others, and work so hard in lessons.
- The high level of interesting subjects that you study and the wide range of activities you undertake.
- The way the staff really care for you and guide you in your work.
- How you are helped to move on to a bright future.

What we have asked the college to do now to make it even better:

- Look at trends in your subject scores to make sure every type of learner is achieving as much as they are capable of.