

New College Worcester

New College, 2 Whittington Road, WORCESTER WR5 2JX

Inspection dates	08/03/2017 to 10/03/2017	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Children and young people make excellent progress as a result of their experiences at school. This often exceeds the expectations of professionals.
- Whole school communication is excellent. All children and young people benefit from the collaborative and meticulous approach of staff.
- Safety and security is prioritised and embedded in every aspect of the running of the school.
- Children and young people live in an inclusive environment where disability is not accepted as a barrier to experiencing a full and enriched life.
- Children and young people make and sustain friendships with their peers, which adds considerable value to their life experiences.
- A highly motivated and dedicated staff team have the skills, ability and knowledge to deliver a consistently high and nurturing level of care.
- The voices of children and young people are prioritised. Their views and opinions are regularly sought and acted upon.
- Feedback from children and young people, their parents and other professionals is unanimously excellent.
- The school has a highly qualified and experienced management team. Monitoring is robust and drives forward improvements to the service for children and young people's benefit.
- The use of research is integral of everyday practice.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make some improvements to the sixth form hostel.
- Review staff training in respect of self-harm, mental health, and moving and handling.
- Make sure that the qualifications of some therapists employed by the school are correctly recorded.
- Make sure that information about children and young people is more consistently held in school records.

Information about this inspection

The college was given three hours' notice of the inspection. Meetings were held with the principal and deputy principal, head and deputy head of care, residential staff, governors, SENCO, activities coordinator, health and safety staff and children and young people. Parents were spoken to on the phone and in face-to-face discussions. Staff briefings were observed. Inspectors attended a school assembly. Two evenings were spent in the residential accommodation observing staff and interactions in activities with children and young people. Meals were also taken with children and young people.

Inspection team

Julia Wright

Lead social care inspector

Christy Wannop

Social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

New College Worcester (NCW) is a non-maintained special school, providing education and care for children and young people who are blind or partially sighted, within the 11 to 19 age range, who are able to access the National Curriculum and progress to study beyond 16. There are currently 74 children and young people on roll. 69 children and young people are residential on a termly or weekly basis. While all children and young peoples have visual impairment, some also have additional needs. Children and young people stay in three residential houses (for young people in Year 7 to 11), and a sixth form hostel, and house. All residential accommodation is located on campus. The residential provision was last inspected in January 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Outcomes for children and young people who use the residential provision are outstanding. Children and young people make excellent and sustained progress in many areas of their lives, but especially in their educational progress, making and sustaining friendships, developing confidence and preparation for independence. Children and young people are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about their residential experience. One young person told the inspector, 'I am so happy to be here. I feel happy every day. Every time I wake up, I know that it is going to be a good day. I am so proud about being a member of this school.'

A dedicated and nurturing staff team care for children and young people. Children and young people enjoy a stimulating and extremely enjoyable time in their residential houses as staff prioritise fun and enjoyable experiences to enrich the lives of all.

There is a fantastic range of activities available to children and young people, including goal ball, running, yoga, tandem riding and ice skating, plus many other options. Activity coordinators work with school and residential staff to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to join in. Staff members strive high and want the very best for all. One young person told the inspectors, 'I am so proud that I have developed such great skills in this game. I have travelled to other countries to play. Sometimes I can't believe it.'

Managers and staff have an excellent understanding of children and young people's needs. Relationships between children and young people are exceptional. Children and young people confidently approach staff for help and advice when needed. Staff are skilled and vigilant about any changes in children and young people's presentation that may indicate that they need additional support. A parent told one of the inspectors, 'Staff keep a close eye on her, and always know where she is. She is so well looked after, I could not ask for more.'

All members of staff place children and young people at the heart of everything the school does. Children and young people are encouraged and empowered to contribute their views and suggestions for the development of the residential provision, and are confident that all staff members are interested in their views and will try to accommodate them. Consequently, children and young people invest time, energy and commitment in the school community knowing that their views are matter.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of care and support provided to children and young people is outstanding. Children and young people receive excellent standards of care consistent with their individual needs. Residential and education staff members work closely together and identify when additional help is needed by any child or young person. Whole school briefings facilitate and reinforce the focus on all children and young people. Strong cohesive leadership provides excellent direction and guidance, including the use of

research that helps staff shape day-to-day practice. A parent told inspectors, 'What a fantastic school. This has made such a difference to him. He has friends, activities and interests just like any other young person. His confidence has grown so much. It is down to all the staff here.'

Constructive relationships between school and residential staff, children and young people, parents and professionals reinforce an inclusive approach. All members of staff set clear boundaries and high expectations for behaviour and conduct. Children and young people strive to maintain positive behaviour, and are helped with incentives and occasional sanctions when behaviour falls below that expected.

Admission and induction practice is excellent. Children, young people and their parents have the opportunity to visit the school, including the residential houses, meet staff and see plenty of helpful written information about the school. This helps children, young people and their parents to make informed choices about whether the provision is right for them. One young person commented, 'I had come a few times and knew a lot about it before I came, so it made settling in much easier.'

Children and young people are confident that their views are taken seriously. They have contributed their views to national research about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people in residential special schools. Children and young people feel respected and that what they say matters, not only within school but also nationally. They know that there are a range of trusted adults to talk to who will discuss their worries and concerns.

A recent innovation at the school has been the development of a youth club for the use of all children and young people attending school. Children and young people are thrilled with the new facilities, and the opportunities that it gives them to enjoy additional activities such as music sessions in an informal environment, the chance to meet other young people completing placements in youth work, who bring additional ideas and suggestions to enhance the facility, and table games. One young person told the inspector, 'It's great, something else to do and we are all involved.'

A great strength of the school is how members of staff help children and young people develop age-appropriate independence skills. Parents, children and young people gave many examples of skills learned at school that transferred to home. These included making hot drinks, doing the laundry and cooking and self-care. Children and young people learn independent life skills as part of the school routine, and liaison between the school and residential staff ensures that all adults are aware of children and young people's progress and target areas for development. Children and young people are helped to develop mobility skills that enable them to develop confidence in travelling into the wider community. One young person commented, 'I love having mobility. It makes me so much more independent and it builds my confidence for when I leave here.'

Meticulous attention is paid to the promotion of children and young people's health and well-being, including their emotional and mental health. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers, and children and young people and make sure that all information is updated and relevant to their current needs. Consequently, children and young people develop a better understanding of their health and how to look after themselves as they

move towards independence. Medication is well managed and safely administered. Specialist services, such as child and adolescent mental health services, are accessed when necessary. Occasionally, a young person has not received a service when it has been identified as needed, and they have been helped by staff to complain to the relevant authorities. Children and young people develop an understanding of their rights as a citizen, and develop confidence about accessing services they should receive.

The residential houses are mainly very clean, safe and comfortable surroundings. The houses are homely and comfortable, but some areas of the sixth form hostel fall below this high standard. This relates to the carpeting, and some decoration of the hostel. Managers are aware of the shortfalls and have action plans in place to improve the surroundings.

Children and young people enjoy a range of healthy and balanced meals. Children and young people were very complimentary about the menus. One said, 'I love Fridays the best – fish and chips. The cook is great because of there are things we want, they try and provide it. Sometimes some people only eat certain things – and they cook that especially.'

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The school has excellent arrangements for ensuring that children and young people are kept safe at all times. The safety of children and young people is at the heart of the school's every day practice. All members of the residential staff team receive safeguarding training that they apply in their everyday practice to keep children and young people at school safe.

Staff understand the risks of children and young people leaving the school site without agreement. This rarely happens, but when it has, managers and staff respond appropriately and swiftly reinforcing safety and protection. Incidents of bullying, missing from home, the use of restraint and sanctions are rare. Children and young people report feeling safe. They say that they talk to staff if they are concerned about anything. One young person told the inspector about previous worries she had about bullying and said, 'It was OK though because staff sorted it out straightaway. We don't have to worry.'

The school's leadership team self-evaluates their safeguarding arrangements. The current self-evaluation is a thorough evaluation and action planning document offering a comprehensive evaluation of the school's performance and ambition. There is well-established monitoring by governors ensuring that they know what is happening in the residential provision, particularly in relation to any safeguarding issues and the school's response.

Approaches to safeguarding issues are exceptionally thorough and all staff are knowledgeable and well-informed about the steps to take if they have concerns about a child or young person. Robust staff guidance and procedures are available for all staff and these are regularly discussed in meetings, and in staff supervisions. A safeguarding governor is appointed who visits the children and young people in residence. As a result, the systematic focus of safeguarding by the whole school ensures that children and

young people's safety remains the priority for all.

Managers and members of staff understand the complexities of some children and young people's communication and behaviour needs. Staff are skilled in using de-escalation techniques. They know each child and young person well, and identify when behaviour becomes heightened.

Comprehensive risk assessments are in place that protect effectively children and young people in the school and in the community. These address individual needs and vulnerabilities as well as environmental risks or those related to specific activities. Risk assessments are regularly scrutinised. For example, managers are reviewing the measures in place on the school site, which is quite open and accessible, to ensure that the ongoing safety of all children and young people.

Rigorous recruitment procedures mean that only suitable checked adults have contact with children and young people.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

There have been changes at the school since the last inspection with the appointment of a new principal and head of care. Leadership and management of the school are exceptionally strong. The head of care is experienced, skilled and knowledgeable, and is supported in his role by a highly qualified senior staff team. Leaders and managers have high expectations and aspirations for children and young people, and this ethos is assimilated by all members of staff.

Residential staff are skilled, committed and dedicated to the children and young people they care for. The training offered to staff is an ongoing programme, supplemented by staff's own research-based presentations to colleagues about a variety of topics, including autism spectrum disorder and specific issues around visual and other sensory impairment. The school's qualified nurses also support residential staff in understanding children and young people's medical needs including epilepsy and diabetes care. Areas identified as needing further training input for staff include self-harm, mental health and moving and handling. Occasionally, the qualifications of specialist staff working at the school need to be clarified as they can seem to be misleading. Leaders and managers are taking appropriate action to address these minor shortfalls.

The school strives to be a centre of excellence, and leaders and managers have firm links with local higher education institutions, and they share good practice in relation to the needs of the children and young people attending the school. In addition, the school is working with a national charity to help inform parents and professionals about research into Battens disease with the aim of disseminating information relating to educating and improving the lives of children and young people with this condition.

One of the school governors is developing a phone app which will inform the children and young people in more detail about hazards in the environment. There is also a pilot with Braille notes used as a communication tool using Bluetooth technology. Children and young people are involved in exciting new technological developments.

Children and young people are cared for by a consistent and, in many cases, long-standing staff team. Agency staff are not used, as managers reinforce the need for consistency for the children and young people. Staff benefit from having regular supervision where they can discuss individual children and young people, as well as their own development needs.

Information in children and young people's files is not always consistently recorded across school. This area was a point for improvement at the previous inspection. The new head of care is reviewing all of the administrative systems used by residential staff to make it more streamlined, accessible and effective.

The head of care works well with internal services, external professionals and families to ensure that children and young people receive an integrated care and support. Feedback at this inspection highlighted the overwhelmingly positive feedback from parents, emphasising the outstanding service their children and young people receive from residential staff. One parent told the inspector, 'The school has made such a difference to her. She is a totally different person now, we have seen her grow in confidence, presentation, everything. She is leaving soon, but she is ready, and that is down to staff.'

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceed the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	117064
Social care unique reference number	SC043048
DfE registration number	885/7019

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 residential special schools.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	69
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 19
Headteacher	Miss N. Ross
Date of previous boarding inspection	19/01/2016
Telephone number	01905 763 933
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