

New College Worcester

New College, 2 Whittington Road, WORCESTER, WR5 2JX

Inspection dates	19/01/2016 to 21/01/2016	
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

- Residential students thrive at this college and thoroughly enjoy living in the residential provision.
- Close collaborative working involving multi-disciplinary teams based on site ensures that each residential student has a detailed and bespoke package of care and support.
- An ingrained culture of safeguarding and promoting each residential student's safety ensures that their well-being is promoted and nurtured to an excellent standard.
- Robust monitoring by both internal managers and external visitors ensures that the high standards of conduct and care are rigorously assessed.
- The residential staff and their colleagues who work in the college are ambitious for the residential students and assist them to develop to their potential.
- All members of staff reflect on their practice and welcome feedback, training and appraisal as a means to improve their performance and quality of care.
- One minor shortfall is identified at this inspection relating to students' files.

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?

- Ensure students' files are consistent with other records held within the college.

Information about this inspection

The college was given four hours' notice of the inspection. Meetings were held with the Principal and Deputy Principal, Head and Deputy Head of residential care, residential staff, health care staff, Heads of Key Stages, a governor, activities co-ordinator, a social worker, residential students, health and safety staff and staff in charge of recruitment. Three parents were also spoken to on the telephone. Two evenings were spent in the residential accommodation observing staff and residential students' interactions and activities. The inspectors joined boarders for three meals in different parts of the college.

Inspection team

Andrew Hewston

Lead social care inspector

Julia Wright

Social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

New College Worcester (NCW) is a non-maintained special school, providing education and care for students 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. Students 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 October 2014 as part of the whole school inspection.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Residential students make exceptional progress at the college, developing their independent living skills and self-esteem significantly. Students are consistently positive about the college: 'I think that the place has just been wonderful for me and taught me so much.' Parents are similarly enthusiastic about the care their child receives: 'the staff are always looking out for the kids, but giving them space to develop and learn how to live with their blindness.' Relationships between students and staff are excellent.

Detailed and robust monitoring of practice, records and staff performance instils a culture of excellence and reflection, with a view to improving outcomes for students. The college's use of research continues to develop. It works well with other schools to develop effective systems to support students, such as a new individualised assessment tool to examine the development of social skills. Rigorous self-assessment and ambitious development plans ensure that there is no complacency and a constant drive to improve. Students' views are consistently sought regarding all aspects of their care, through annual surveys, house meetings and individual key working meetings. The college has a wide range of external organisations and professionals that work with them, including social workers and health professionals.

Students' safety is thoroughly supported, with both staff and students having a high awareness of the risks associated with being at college and having a visual impairment. Safeguarding procedures are strong, and the Principal is forthright in challenging services to ensure the safety of all students across the college site. Staff's awareness of safeguarding is high due to regular training and involvement with the risk assessment process.

Opportunities for involvement in activities are of the highest level, with differing interests offered daily. Consideration is given to those wishing to be less active, through 'lower impact' achievements, provided with consultation from visually impaired staff. Both of these options develop students' health and skills. Health arrangements are strong. A designated health team offers continual support to all students including liaising with external professionals to further develop their well-being.

Accommodation is comfortable and homely, with improvements planned for on an ongoing rolling programme. Students develop their independence from the point of their admission, including being involved with the personalisation of their rooms and helping with their laundry. By the time students are due to leave they are expected to be involved with life within the local community and prepared for living on their own.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of care and support offered to students is outstanding. The 24 hour curriculum provides very strong links between all staff, and students benefit as they receive seamless care from highly committed and motivated staff. Students are

unanimous in their praise regarding the support they receive. One said, 'I feel safe here. Staff treat you like their own child. Very comforting for someone who is new to the college and we know that staff look out for us.'

The admission and induction of new residential students is extremely well planned. Prospective students stay in one of the residential houses as part of their initial assessment and information gathered by college staff contributes to a holistic understanding of students' needs. Staff work very effectively with students, families, health and other professionals prior to students joining the college. This ensures that staff have all the information they need to comprehensively meet individual needs.

Residential students are cared for by staff who treat them with the greatest care and respect. All staff have the welfare and safety of students as their foremost priority. Care plans are detailed and thorough and confirm information is reviewed and updated. Consequently, staff have all relevant information they need about each student in their care.

Staff are unreservedly focussed on residential students making progress in all areas of their lives. There is a particular emphasis on students' social and emotional well-being and students make remarkable advances in developing their self-confidence in day to day living. One said: 'everyone grows here, I would not change it for the world.' A professional commented: 'he has developed so many skills. He is out and about and prior to coming, he stayed in his room. Staff are really innovative in how they encouraged him.' Independent living plans target support for each student and ensures that progress is achievable for all. One said: 'we are involved. We tell staff our views. I think staff listen and take account of them.'

The residential houses are very comfortable, extremely welcoming and homely environments for students to live. Students confirmed that they personalise their rooms reflecting personal taste. One said: 'It is like a home from home.' Students enjoy a varied nutritious diet. Some meals are taken as a communal activity in the dining room where socialisation and enjoyment of meals is promoted. Catering staff are knowledgeable about students' needs and offer advice and support about suitable food choices. Careful thought goes into how food is prepared and served, enhancing a sensory experience for all students.

Students' views and opinions are regularly sought in a variety of ways including formal meetings and informal communication. Students feel involved in college life and in their planning and target setting. They express their views about college life, their individual progress and reflect on their development since living at college. They develop self-knowledge, and self-confidence.

Students enjoy a fantastic range of stimulating and enjoyable activities organised through a dedicated team. Annual trips are organised with a local school which encourages friendships and peer support for students. Students choose from a varied timetable of after college clubs, weekend and holiday activities. They confirmed that there is generally something to do which meets everyone's tastes including sports, walks, bowling, cinema, and horse riding. One said: 'I always feel involved here. There are always things to do. No one leaves me out.'

Residential students receive excellent support with their health care needs. This includes not only practical support where needed but also considerable help with their understanding about healthy living. Staff work closely with parents and carers who retain primary responsibility for students' health. Outstanding care is enhanced by the role of the college nurses, who play a key role in promoting and maintaining students' good health and well-being. Students receive continuity of care as staff are knowledgeable about issues relating to their health, diet and medication.

Students keep in touch with family and friends. Contact arrangements for each student are well understood by staff. As residential students are living away from their families, staff are keenly aware that some students struggle as they are a distance from home. Support and nurture is available to all to respond to this.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Safeguarding permeates the culture with students having their well-being promoted to the highest levels. Approaches to child protection are robust and far-reaching, thus ensuring not only the safety of students but also challenging the actions of other agencies to fulfil their statutory duties. Rare safeguarding concerns are responded to by providing support and intervention through the diligence of the Principal. Records relating to safeguarding concerns are detailed, giving a clear chronology and highlighting the persistence that staff have taken to support individuals. The designated person conscientiously follows up concerns to ensure that positive outcomes follow for all students involved. Clear lines of responsibility are in place, which include appropriate involvement and scrutiny from experienced and well trained governors. Staff are trained to recognise concerns. This ensures anxieties, fears or disclosures made by students are taken seriously and acted upon. Effective working with local safeguarding children's boards and the police ensures matters are addressed in line with agreed local and national protocols. Robust recruitment processes support the safety of students well.

The way in which the college promotes safeguarding awareness is excellent. All staff are trained in child protection irrespective of their roles. Senior staff complete both local safeguarding board training and additional external training, ensuring that they are fully aware of differing approaches to the safety of students. Effective arrangements are in place to fully support students should they wish to talk to an adult, including external independent listeners, governors completing half-termly visits or staff within the school. All students identify key personnel that they have confidence in turning to if they are worried about aspects of their lives at the school.

Clear, robust arrangements are in place to respond to missing students. No students have gone missing since the last inspection. Students are not held back from developing their levels of independence. The college balances the need to keep students safe and help them learn how to become safer in public. A rigorous assessment process supports them to take appropriate risks to experience their local surroundings alongside acknowledging their vulnerabilities. This approach has enabled them to make significant strides in improving their awareness of potential risks and, in doing so, gain invaluable

independence skills. Similarly, risks relating to drugs, alcohol, and sexual exploitation are responded to effectively by staff, including discussions with students and well-known protocols in place relating to them going off the college site.

Discriminatory practices are strongly challenged. Staff are encouraged to respond proactively to issues such as bullying, homophobic behaviour and sexism. Staff have completed training in radicalisation and this is a topic in assemblies to raise awareness of extremism. Decreasing risks relating to the use of the internet and sexual exploitation form part of the whole college curriculum as well as residential staff being diligent with their awareness of concerning behaviours in this area.

Students benefit considerably from living in an environment where appropriately high standards of behaviour are promoted as the norm. The strength of relationships between staff and residential pupils enable them to explore their feelings, attitudes and behaviours safely. This results in significant improvements in their coping mechanisms. The use of restraint is extremely rare and sanctions seldom imposed, using restorative justice as a more appropriate and positive response to challenging behaviours. Behaviour seen during the inspection was exemplary.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

An effective and inspirational team, who consistently strive to develop the residential experience, lead the provision. Staff and students are complimentary about the senior team, with one student stating that 'they are always around if we want to talk to them or get things changed.' Residence is well staffed, by enthusiastic and experienced staff, who are supplemented by volunteers from other countries, giving students an increased awareness of the world.

Monitoring of residence is exemplary. Managers and staff constantly examine the way that they work and strive for improvement. The Head of Care's termly 'top ten achievements and five areas of developments' link well to each home's individual improvement plans and the college's care management improvement plan. Regular grading of the residential response to the national minimum standards further highlights the college's commitment to development. Monitoring from the college's governors is effective and robust, including monthly visits from differing individuals, including those with visual impairment who are supported during the visit.

All members of staff have their performance appraised and receive regular supervision. This process is supported by varied training which enables staff to develop skills which benefit all students. The staff team is highly committed and motivated. Reflection on practice is an embedded part of the culture. Any complaint, concern or incident is examined thoroughly in an open and transparent manner and learning from these is valued and welcomed.

Staff teams across the site work collaboratively. They examine each other's areas of practice while ensuring consistency in areas such as record keeping and behaviour management. Records are extensive and detailed; they are completed to a high

standard, although some minor additional cross-referencing regarding communication with parents and complaints information is necessary, ensuring that individual files include the same detail as the home's information.

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 exceeds 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	

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	79
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to19
Headteacher	Mardy Smith
Date of previous boarding inspection	23/10/2014
Telephone number	01905 763933
Email address	msmith@newcollegeworcester.co.uk

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