

WESC Foundation

WESC Foundation, Topsham Road, Countess Wear, Exeter EX2 6HA

Inspection dates

20 to 22 June 2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement 3

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision requires improvement because

- Leaders and managers do not regularly scrutinise records relating to the use of restraint or make safeguarding referrals to external agencies in a timely manner. However, there are no concerns that failing to do this has placed young people at risk of harm. Management oversight of aspects of the residential provision lacks rigour.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that young people's views are sought or recorded following the use of physical intervention, or restraint.
- Care plans do not identify specific targets for young people to achieve and how outcomes for them are measured. In addition, young people are not involved in the development or review of their plans.
- Strengths of the provision include the way that residential staff, education staff and the therapy support services all work collaboratively to ensure that young people's specific needs are met.
- Young people benefit from a wide range of social, recreational and leisure facilities. They enjoy activities such as swimming, sailing, bike-riding and trips to local attractions. They speak enthusiastically about using and running the on-site radio station.
- Leaders and managers ensure that health and safety is promoted, and aids and adaptations are provided to meet the individual and collective needs of young people.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12.6 A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice.
- 13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.
- 21.1 The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere, such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the use of monitoring equipment in young people's bedrooms and the use of stairgates based on individual risk.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was an unannounced inspection, as the Department for Education requested that this inspection also included a monitoring visit following the outcome of the last inspection. Inspection activities included discussions with young people, the principal, the director of care and education, residential staff, senior managers, the head of the therapeutic team, the nurse, the chair of trustees and the estates manager. Inspector observed and joined in with some activities, reviewed key policies and documents and spent time in the two main residential houses. The houses accommodating older residential students aged 17 and 18 were not visited on this inspection.

Inspection team

David Kidner	Lead social care inspector
Lucy Martin	Her Majesty's Inspector social care

Full Report

Information about this school

WESC Foundation is situated in Exeter, Devon. It is a specialist provision for children and young adults with visual impairment and often with additional complex needs. The foundation provides residential care and education for learners from the age of nine to 27 years. There are approximately 55 learners on roll in both the school and the college.

The residential accommodation for learners under the age of 19 years is predominantly located in two houses for those aged 16 years and under. This provision offers flexible boarding arrangements from one to four nights each week during term time. In post-16 years, learners are accommodated in other buildings on site to represent a college environment. A 52-week provision for young adults also forms part of the foundation and is inspected by the Care Quality Commission.

The school provides a range of health and specialised therapy services. The residential accommodation and educational facilities are all on one 16 acre site. There are some residential facilities and adaptations to meet the needs of young people with physical disabilities. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2015.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

Leaders and managers do not ensure that they scrutinise all matters relating to the use of restraint, or make safeguarding referrals to external agencies in a timely manner. However, there are no concerns that this has resulted in young people being placed at risk of harm. In addition, young people's views are not sought following the use of physical intervention or restraint.

The internal monitoring of some aspects of the residential provision lacks scrutiny, and there is not a clear development plan for the service.

Care and support plans do not identify specific targets for young people to achieve, and there is no evidence of how their progress is measured. Young people are not involved in the planning of their care and it is not clear what impact staying at the residential provision has upon their lives.

Monitoring devices are used widely throughout the residential provision and care plans and risk assessments identify the reasons for their use. However, leaders and managers have not explored other measures in order to ensure that young people's privacy and movement are not compromised.

Young people enjoy their experience in the residential provision. There are good relationships between young people and staff. Young people are supported by a staff team which provides individual care and support. The staff have a good awareness of young people's needs and work in collaboration with a wide range of therapy support services in order to meet their needs.

Residential staff and education staff work in partnership to ensure that young people's education needs are supported and promoted.

Young people's health and well-being is promoted. They like the food and specific dietary needs are catered for. Aids and adaptations are provided to promote their independence. This includes specialist equipment for eating and drinking, pouring drinks and cooking meals. In addition, young people are encouraged to assist in household tasks, such as clearing the table after meals. This promotes their confidence and self-esteem.

Leaders and managers ensure that the residential provision is well organised and that there are sufficient numbers of staff on duty to meet young people's needs.

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement

The residential provision provides care and support to young people with very diverse needs. Some young people require high levels of staff support while others are more

independent. However, young people's care and support plans do not contain specific targets for young people to achieve and there is no evidence of how their progress is measured. Young people are not involved in the planning of their care and it is not clear what impact staying at the residential provision has upon their lives. The principal and the director of care and education agree that this is an area that needs to be developed further.

At night-time, some young people have electronic monitoring devices in their bedrooms or a stairgate fitted to bedroom doors. Care plans and risk assessments evidence this assessed need. However, these practices are common, and alternative methods have not been explored in order to ensure that young people's privacy is not compromised or their movement restricted.

Staff have a good awareness and understanding of young people's individual needs. They work in collaboration with education staff and therapeutic staff in order to ensure that there is a clear and agreed approach to the delivery of care. Young people's health care needs are promoted and staff seek the advice and support of the nursing team when required. The nurses and therapy team provide specific guidance for staff to meet the needs of those young people with complex health care needs. Young people have access to support in their speech and language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Young people are supported in understanding and managing their emotional needs and they have good opportunities to access specific guidance on relationship building and keeping themselves safe.

There is good management of medicines at the school and any errors in the recording and administration of medicines are investigated, and appropriate action is taken.

Young people enjoy a wide range of purposeful social, educational and leisure opportunities. They speak enthusiastically about going swimming, bike-riding, visits to local area attractions and using the on-site radio station. The residential accommodation provides young people with play and sensory equipment as well as electronic devices such as a Wii and a PlayStation.

The residential provision is decorated and maintained to a good standard. Young people personalise their bedrooms, and bring their personal possessions from home, including photographs of their families and their favourite toys. The therapy support team ensures that young people have the appropriate aids and adaptations to meet their needs when staying at the residential provision.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have extended their management information systems. This has led to an improvement in staff recognising, and reporting safeguarding concerns. Senior managers scrutinise safeguarding records and challenge staff about their record keeping. This is to ensure that staff continue to improve on their recording so that records are clear and concise. Senior managers have also challenged

external agencies in matters relating to safeguarding, which demonstrates a rigour not previously seen. However, these processes need to be embedded, and practice needs to be consolidated.

There have been delays in leaders and managers referring some matters relating to safeguarding to external agencies in a timely manner. This includes referring matters to the local authority designated officer and children's services. However, there are no concerns that the delays have resulted in young people being placed at risk of harm. The local authority designated officer confirms that leaders and managers seek advice and that they take the recommended course of action. They also keep them informed of the outcome of internal investigations.

In addition, leaders and managers do not always audit records relating to the use of physical intervention and restraint in a timely manner. The school's trainers in the use of de-escalation and restraint said that reviews of the use of physical intervention and restraint are discussed and evaluated at regular safeguarding meetings. However, minutes of these meetings did not evidence this practice. In addition, young people's views on the use of restraint are not recorded.

With the introduction of the extended management system, there has been an improvement in the recording of physical intervention and restraint. Written records evidence the behaviours that were being exhibited that led to an intervention, and clearly identify the action that has been taken. If needed, staff ensure that body maps are maintained to record any injuries as a result of an intervention.

Staff have received safeguarding training and demonstrate a good awareness of child protection procedures. Leaders and managers have reviewed their child protection policy and this has been agreed by Devon County Council.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have reviewed the school's behaviour management policy, which is dated March 2016. This is a comprehensive document that clearly identifies how positive behaviour is promoted. It refers to the school's related policies including anti-bullying, physical interventions and when young people are missing from school.

Staff are provided with effective behaviour support plans that guide them in how to manage young people's behaviours. Following serious incidents, leaders and managers ensure that the plans are updated to reflect young people's behaviour support needs.

There have not been any recorded incidents of young people missing or sanctions being imposed, and no concerns in respect of child sexual exploitation. Bullying is not reported as a concern.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff selection and recruitment processes are robust in order to safeguard young people.

Comprehensive risk assessments and regular safety checks across the whole school site promote a safe environment for young people. Fire safety is promoted and there is regular testing of the school's fire safety system, firefighting equipment and regular fire drills.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

There has been improvement in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. The school has extended its use of an electronic recording system that provides leaders and managers with a wide range of management information and has been designed to be accessible to all staff. This has improved the reporting of safeguarding and restraint across the whole school site. However, following the introduction of this system, leaders and managers have failed to ensure that they scrutinise all matters relating to the use of restraint, or to ensure that safeguarding referrals are always made to external agencies in a timely manner.

Improved monitoring of the residential provision takes place. Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have appointed an external consultant who has been working alongside the trustees in monitoring the residential provision, which has resulted in closer scrutiny of the provision. However, there is still work to be done in order to evidence the monitoring of actions.

There is clear leadership and management of the residential provision, and effective links are made between residential staff and school staff. Residential staff consider that they all work 'as one team' alongside education and the therapy support team.

Leaders and managers ensure that there are adequate staff on duty in order to meet the very individual needs of the young people. Staff receive regular supervision, and through discussions some staff said that they are now receiving supervision based on reflective practice. One member of staff said: 'Supervisions have changed. I reflect more and they are more focused on the needs of the young people.' Senior managers acknowledge that this practice needs to be embedded further.

Staff receive mandatory training, including safeguarding, de-escalation and restraint and first aid. There is always a staff member on duty who is first aid trained. In addition, the therapy support team provides specific specialised training to staff based on the individual needs of young people. Nearly all staff are trained to level 3 in childcare or equivalent.

Leaders and managers ensure that robust investigations are undertaken when they receive a complaint. They clearly record the action that they have taken and the outcome.

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	113652
Social care unique reference number	SC022223
DfE registration number	878/7081

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	21
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	Four to 18
Headteacher	Tracy de Bernhardt Dunkin
Date of previous boarding inspection	5 November 2015
Telephone number	01392 454 200
Email address	tracybd@wescfoundation.ac.uk

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