

CORNWALL LEA

OUT-OF-AUTHORITY SPECIAL VISIT SCHEDULE

School	West of England School and College – WESC Foundation
Date of visit	8 th October 2013
Preamble	<p>The West of England School and College (WoE) is a non-maintained school and college for pupils and students with visual impairments. Rebranded in 2012 as the WESC Foundation, it was set up in 1838 it has been on its current site since the 1960's. There have been major changes at WESC over the past 8 years following the appointment of a new Principal: there has been a greater focus placed upon the underlying aspects of visual impairment rather than a concentration upon visual acuity. As such the school and college has developed areas such as neuropsychology, for which it is developing training and research programmes. The change in emphasis has coincided with a changing profile of learners: now the school and college increasingly caters for learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and/or those with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) all of whom have additional visual impairments. There has also been a substantial reduction in the numbers of pupils/student attending, being reduced by approximately half.</p> <p>The school and college are housed in well-maintained buildings over a large green site. There are a great number of resources designed specifically to aid the education of children with visual impairments. It is residential, with the residential element sharing the same site. Whilst the school and college takes from approximately 25 different local authorities, most of these learners are direct referrals, with most of the learners – approximately 50% - coming from Devon. There is a gradual downward trend for referrals, with the school/college having 83 in education, with a further 8 in 52 week placements.</p>
Form of provision	Independent Special School and College
Purpose of visit	Annual Monitoring Visit
Significant changes since previous visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The major re-structuring undertaken in 2011 continues to embed • Visual Impairment Profiles now embedded in planning for learning • Assessments are now functionally linked, and these are starting to have an impact on achievement • Focus upon eSafety in 2012/13 – now integrated within curriculum and planning • Communication Strategy, developed in 2012/1, being implemented in 2013/14 academic year. • School/college have placed emphasis upon Curriculum Coordination over past year, with all teachers developing more explicitly their roles. • Introduction in September 2013 of the Victoria Curriculum as the basis for curriculum intervention for pupils/students with PMLD. This is a significant development, but the school/college recognises that this has not yet had time to make substantial impact upon achievement/progress.

	Date of last Ofsted	Date of last Social Care inspection	Outcome
Ofsted	16-17 March 2011	5-7 March 2013	Good Outstanding
Issues arising from Ofsted	<p>NB: WESC will be inspected before the end of the current academic year. With previous Social Care Inspection in previous academic year, likelihood is that this will be a joint inspection, probably around March 2014.</p> <p><i>Build on the good work already started to develop the roles of middle managers by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning more so that they are as fully involved as possible in helping to lift the overall quality, thus enabling them to contribute more strategically to the self-evaluation process</i> <p>WESC has developed a number of internal working groups that focus upon different aspects, therefore effectively bringing Middle Managers within the leadership fold. There is an <i>Inspection Ready Action Group (IRAG)</i> which ensures that all policies/procedures and protocols are fully up to date and inspection ready. Similarly, there is a <i>Matrix Audit Group (MAG)</i> which ensures that school/college is fully compliant with contracts with local authorities. These, plus the emphasis placed upon develop the Curriculum Coordination roles of all teachers, including the Middle Managers, has ensured that Middle Managers are now more able to contribute to the development of the school/college. Nine members of staff are currently working on a Level 5 Management Training course.</p> <p><i>Lift the quality of teaching and learning so that it is outstanding overall by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensuring that those who are capable and keen to do so have increased opportunities to work, learn and socialise as independently as possible</i> • <i>Making sure that different practical resources are used as well as possible to help pupils in different ways when using their working senses</i> • <i>Optimising opportunities for pupils to use their speaking and communication skills within lessons</i> <p>The school/college has continued to concentrate upon raising the Quality of Teaching (QoT) through the development of more effective assessments procedures, including the development of functional assessments and the incorporation of Visual Impairment Profiles. The Senior leadership Team (SLT) believe that these are starting to impact upon the QoT, where the linking of visual assessments to the students' learning is seen as the key to success. Performance Management structures have been enhanced, using the Teachers' Standards as the basis for judgements.</p>		

Overview

Achievement of Pupils/Students

The school/college continues to assess the pupils/students against the P Scales, reflecting the increasing levels of difficulty experienced by the learners referred to the school. Because the vast majority of the students are never going to achieve 'above low' (in Ofsted-speak), the school/colleges achievement judgement will not be made in terms of their attainment (against national standards) but how they have achieved against their prior levels of achievement, and how fast that progress has been. Assessment is completed annually at the end of the school year using the descriptors within the P Scales, informed by assessments using the electronic B² system. Targets for individual learners are benchmarked using CASPA.

Although aware of them, the school/college does not use the Progression Materials in any systematic way, which may make them vulnerable when inspected (Ofsted are required to use the Progression Materials as their prime means of forming judgements about progress and achievement). Ofsted will need to ensure that the targets set for the learners are sufficiently challenging and how progress towards those targets is tracked to against national comparators: CASPA does this to a certain degree but Ofsted inspectors are advised that the initial judgements should be against the Progression Materials.

In 2013, the school/college has introduced the Victoria Curriculum to frame the curriculum for those pupils/students with PMLD. This does not contain an inherent assessment schema, so the school/college are using PIVOTS as the means to track progress. This is very new, so the school will need to be wary of making claims for its success in the first year.

The school/college has been using its bespoke SKIPs curriculum (*Skills and Knowledge for Independent People*) developed by the Occupational Therapy Team. This functional life-skills programme links through its *Momentum Programme* and is used primarily within Post 16. This programme extends to all settings within the college, residential and educational, to ensure the students have the maximum opportunity possible to develop independence skills based upon their stated destination post school.

The school/college also run a number of non-accredited schemes, which it is seeking to validate with a cluster of providers.

The school/college has graded itself as **Good**. It does not think it is yet Outstanding because of the newness of the Victoria Curriculum, and the robustness of the data from previous years. It will also have to be wary of the use of national comparators in relation to progress against the P Scales: while it uses CASPA to benchmark, Ofsted may prefer to see greater use of the Progression Materials.

Quality of Teaching (inc Performance Management)

The school/college believes that the greater emphasis placed upon more accurate and robust data to inform assessments, and the more rigorous approach in monitoring classroom practice is now starting to impact and increase the quality of teaching (QoT). In 2011/12, it found that 71.5% of its observed lessons (one per year per teacher) were graded as Good or Outstanding, while in the 2012/13 year, this had risen to 91%. No lessons observed in 2012/13 were considered Inadequate. (During inspection Ofsted may be wary of claims made about QoT based upon a single

observation each year: they may want greater depth of analysis than this.) For those teachers whose lesson was graded *Requires Improvement*, an improvement plan is put into place which utilises Mentors and specific CPD. The system of classroom observation introduced in 2012/13 continues to be used rigorously, and is felt to be central to raising standards. The school/college says that it now uses the Teachers' Standards to baseline and benchmark performance within the Classroom Observations, although this could not be verified. Peer Observations are welcomed by staff.

WESC continues to offer many CPD opportunities to its staff: from external courses to in-house, non-accredited ones. It reports that 9 members of staff are attending Level 5 Management Training Courses, with a further 25 on in-house or external courses.

Performance Management for the support staff was introduced in the 2012/13 academic year.

The school/college considers that its QoT is on the cusp between **Outstanding** and **Good**: what makes the difference is the degree by which the teacher includes the 'VI-ness' of the learners within the planning and delivery. The school/college recognises the fact that, in inspection, it is unlikely that the QoT judgement will be higher than the judgement on Achievement.

Behaviour and Safety

The behaviour of the pupils/students continues to be exemplary. The students showed respect for each other, and they were diligent in their approach to learning. The high adult-pupil ratios within the school/college ensure that all behavioural issues are quickly tackled at an individual level. Individual programmes can quickly be put into place: for example a student described as 'school-phobic' recently joined the school. A safe-space was quickly established where he could work outside of the traditional classroom, with a programme of work designed to reintegrate him at a pace appropriate to his needs.

The school/college grade their Behaviour and Safety as **Outstanding**.

Leadership and Management

WESC is well led and managed with an efficient and effective SLT who are resilient and determined to raise standards. However, it recognises that not all of the Trustees have fully developed their role in monitoring and challenging established practice to ensure it is as effective as it can be. There have been significant development in this role in the past year with the appointment of new Trustees, but as a whole this is an area of development for the school/college. WESC recognises that the new Ofsted framework places greater emphasis upon Governance, where it now merits a separate paragraph in the report. As such, it feels it can only grade its Leadership and Management as **Good**. It recognises that the L&M grade is rarely higher than the QoT grade.

Conclusions	WESC continues to provide at least a Good education for its pupils/students. It is due an inspection within the current academic year, and on the evidence provided, it is likely that this will result in a grade of Good. It could be higher (or lower!) depending upon the inspector and his/her response to how the school/college tracks its data (ie, not using the Progression Materials), the security of the QoT data and the impact of the Trustees.		
Recommendations	To continue to use WESC for pupils/students with significant visual impairments alongside their learning difficulties.		
Signed	Bob Coburn	Date	9 th October 2013.