

WESC Foundation

Topsham Road, Countess Wear, Exeter EX2 6HA

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

WESC Foundation is situated in Exeter, Devon. It is a specialist provision for children and young adults who have visual impairment and, often, 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 who have physical disabilities.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 20 June 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Requires improvement

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- Leaders and managers do not ensure that learners' views are sought and recorded following the use of restraint and physical intervention. This was a shortfall identified at the last inspection.
- Further improvement is required in relation to ensuring that all learners' individual risk assessments clearly identify how risks are to be reduced.
- The recruitment of new staff requires improvement. Some records do not evidence how leaders and managers decide that new staff are suitable when there are gaps in their employment history and references are weak. In addition, senior leaders have not ensured that those staff who live on site have a written agreement that details the terms of their accommodation, and guidance on contact with learners and visitors.
- Learners' individual needs and choices are not always fully considered or met.
- Some aspects of the residential provision require updating. Planned improvements to make these areas more welcoming and homely have not yet begun.
- Monitoring devices are still significantly in evidence, although significantly reduced following a review. There is still evidence of some potentially intrusive monitoring.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Learners benefit from having staff who know them well. Learners said that they feel listened to, they are consulted, and their independence is promoted. They said that they like the activities and have lots to choose from.
- Care plans are detailed and provide staff with guidance on how to meet learners' individual needs. These are regularly reviewed and updated.
- Leaders and managers ensure that learners' health needs are clearly identified and are promoted. There is good collaboration between residential staff, school and the therapy team. There is good management of medicines, and learners' health needs are clearly identified and promoted.
- Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and protocols and receive effective training.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 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.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 14.1 Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- 14.3 There is a written agreement between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as children (for example, members of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with children, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors, and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with children. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence.

Recommendations

- Review the recording methods used to demonstrate a clear audit trail of the actions taken when referring safeguarding concerns to the designated officer, or children's services.
- Review the recording methods used in relation to restraint and physical intervention to clearly evidence the time and duration of each intervention.
- Continue to review the appropriateness of monitoring devices in learners'

bedrooms, and consider less intrusive options.

- Give consideration to improving the homeliness of the residential provision, taking into consideration learners' individual needs.
- Give further consideration to how learners' sensory experiences can be enhanced and to the further provision of technology that aids their independence.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Learners are provided with a variety of aids and adaptations to support their visual impairment, and to promote their independence. However, some learners would benefit from an enhancement of their sensory experiences or further support for their independence. For example, learners say that a talking washing machine would assist their independence when doing their laundry.

Staff know the learners well, they protect them, and promote their health and welfare. They have a good understanding of their individual needs, and learners build positive relationships with staff. However, not all care plans identify learners' cultural and religious needs. In addition, not all learners are clearly offered a choice of meals, and some say that they would appreciate a wider choice.

Learners said that they are treated with respect, and that their dignity is promoted. They enjoy staying in the residential accommodation. They said that they feel safe and listened to. They enjoy access to a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities, including activities in the local community, as appropriate, irrespective of any disability that they may have.

Learners make good progress and have a range of positive experiences. Some learners are actively involved in setting their individual learning 'targets' to develop their independence, interact with others, participate in activities and engage with the wider community. One parent said, 'My son's communication skills have improved.'

Learners are achieving well in education. Residential staff and school staff work closely together to ensure that learners' education needs are supported and promoted.

Learners' health needs are clearly identified and promoted, and there is good management of medicines.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have ensured that matters relating to the safeguarding of learners are referred to external agencies in a timely manner. This includes referring concerns to the designated officer and to children's services. However, in relation to one concern, children's services were not contacted in the first instance. This did not have a negative impact on the safety and well-being of the learner. Detailed records are kept of the action taken following referrals. However, some records do not always demonstrate a clear audit trail.

Leaders and managers largely ensure that there is effective management oversight and reviewing of safeguarding concerns. These are discussed in a variety of forums, including regular multi-disciplinary safeguarding meetings.

Staff demonstrate a good awareness of safeguarding principles and protocols, and receive safeguarding training. Leaders and managers ensure that staff members' safeguarding knowledge and understanding are assessed. Staff have confidence in senior managers responding to any concerns that they may have in relation to the safety and well-being of learners.

Positive behaviour is promoted, and staff receive training in de-escalation to avoid restraint. Sanctions are not imposed, and restraint is used as a last resort. Staff are provided with comprehensive guidance in how to meet learners' behaviour support needs. This guidance is regularly updated and reviewed. However, the management of risk requires improvement. This is because not all risk assessments provide staff with information about how to manage and reduce risks using the agreed aids.

There is regular and effective monitoring of the use of restraint and physical intervention. However, learners' views about the interventions are not recorded. This was identified as a shortfall at the last inspection. In addition, recording systems in relation to the use of restraint do not always evidence a clear and concise audit trail.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have reassessed the use of monitoring devices based on learners' individual needs. This has resulted in a significant reduction in their use. However, regular reviews of these should continue, to ensure their appropriateness and to consider less intrusive options.

The recruitment of new staff requires improvement. It is not evident how leaders and managers decide that new staff are suitable when there are gaps in their employment history and references are weak. In addition, senior leaders have failed to provide those who live on site with a written agreement that details the terms of their accommodation, and guidance on contact with learners and visitors.

Learners said that they feel safe, and parents consider that their child is safe at the provision. There have not been any recorded incidents of young people going missing and no concerns in respect of bullying or child sexual exploitation.

Detailed environmental risk assessments and regular fire safety checks promote a safe environment for learners. There is regular testing of the fire equipment and regular fire drills. In addition, leaders and managers ensure that the provision's utilities are regularly serviced.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be

good

There has been some improvement in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. This includes matters relating to safeguarding procedures, the monitoring of restraint, use of monitoring devices, and care planning. However, leaders and managers have failed to address the shortfall identified at the last inspection in relation to seeking the views of learners, following the use of restraint and physical intervention. In addition, this inspection has identified shortfalls in relation to staff recruitment, and some areas of risk management.

These areas aside, leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They ensure that regular visits and detailed reports are provided following visits by an independent visitor, and trustees. Recommendations made in these reports are responded to effectively. The school's statement of principles and practice is kept under review.

Leaders and managers respond effectively to complaints. There has been one recorded complaint since the last inspection. Comprehensive and detailed records are maintained to demonstrate the action taken to resolve the complaint.

Staff are provided with comprehensive and detailed care and support plans that provide them with all of the information necessary for meeting the needs of learners, some of whom have complex support needs. These plans are regularly reviewed and updated and contain associated risk assessments. The therapy support team guides and supports staff with information about how to meet learners' specific health needs.

Staff said that they feel supported and listened to and receive regular and effective supervision. They access mandatory training and specific training to enhance their skills and understanding of learners who have visual impairments.

Some areas of the residential provision do not provide learners with a welcoming and homely environment. Leaders, managers and trustees have identified that significant improvements are needed in the residential provision to enhance the homeliness of the environment. This is identified in their improvement plan for the school. However, improvements across the residential provision have not yet commenced.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what

difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC022223

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Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector(s)

David Kidner, social care inspector (lead)

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