

# WESC Foundation

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

## Inspection dates

03/11/2015 to 05/11/2015

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Inadequate** **4**

The quality of care and support

Requires Improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Inadequate 4

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Inadequate 4

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is inadequate because

- The child protection policy is inadequate. It does not refer to current national safeguarding guidance. Safeguarding concerns are not managed effectively. Staff and managers fail to follow the procedures to escalate safeguarding concerns when they are reported.
- Records of physical intervention are poor and incomplete, indicating that the staff team is unclear about acceptable practice and unsure how to complete the forms. On at least one occasion, when a young person suffered bruising during physical intervention, it is unclear from records if medical attention was sought.
- Behaviour support plans do not always explicitly inform staff how best to respond to known behaviours. Records relating to behaviour management are not routinely assessed to consider if there are additional safeguarding concerns.
- Management oversight is inadequate. Managers view records yet fail to scrutinise the detail. Consequently, incidents of concern are not always raised within the safeguarding team to ensure action is taken to promote the safety and welfare of children and young people.
- Monitoring of the quality of the residential provision by the trustees lacks proper scrutiny and challenge. Written reports do not refer to the failings within the records of physical intervention, despite the trustees having viewed these incomplete records.

## 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.
- 12.1 The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions.
- 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.
- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitor the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.
- 20.2 Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop placement care plans to ensure that they are in a format that can be easily understood by children, young people and their parents.
- Develop the management and oversight of staff supervision and consider reflective supervision to review care practices.

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced at 09:30 on 3 November 2015 and commenced later that day at 13:30. Inspection activities included discussions with children and young people, parents, the principal, the deputy principal, the head of care, residential staff and managers, nursing staff, the senior leadership team, the estates manager, the head of visual impairment services, the catering manager, the therapy team and the chair of trustees. Key documents and policies were reviewed. Meals were sampled and the inspectors observed and joined in with activities. The inspectors visited all areas of the residential provision and some school facilities.

## Inspection team

Clare Davies	Lead social care inspector
Jennifer Reed	Social care inspector

# **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 additional complex needs. The Foundation provides residential care and education for children and young people from the age of ten to 25 years. The Foundation offers full-time, part-time, day, and residential and respite placements for the 53 learners on roll, in both the school and the college. The residential accommodation for children and young people under the age of 16 years is predominantly located in two houses. This provision offers flexible boarding arrangements from one to four nights each week during term time. Young people post 16 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. Residential accommodation is in several separate buildings. Some units have facilities and adaptations to meet the needs of young people with physical disabilities. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2015.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Inadequate**

Reporting systems in the school are inadequate. Leaders and managers do not take appropriate action to escalate safeguarding concerns. This leaves children and young people at risk of harm.

Communication amongst the staff team is weak. The failure to share incidents of concern about children and young people who have injured themselves, or presented with bruises, does not support the collaborative working that is promoted across the school. Ineffective reporting procedures mean that any bruising or injuries as identified through body maps are not always referred to nursing staff or the safeguarding team. Records fail to confirm if first aid or medical treatment is provided to children and young people when bruises or injuries are reported.

Children and young people receive medication from trained care staff. Additional training for care staff occurs to meet specific health needs such as epilepsy. Nursing staff monitor the health and medical care delivered by care staff to children and young people, including spot checks with regards to the administration and storage of medicines. This monitoring resulted in the identification of a medication error and consequently safeguarded a child from receiving an incorrect dose. Two medication errors have occurred since the last inspection resulting in investigations to determine the competence of care staff to be able to administer medication. Nursing staff liaise with the visiting general practitioner each week, and with parents and other health professionals, to promote consistency of medical care.

Children and young people benefit from the specialist support available for the visually impaired. The staff team embrace technology and research and use this well to inform their practice. Children and young people report that they like this school and they are able to recognise how they have developed new skills and developed their learning. Parents report positively on this residential school and provide written feedback at annual reviews to express their delight and gratitude.

Children and young people are cared for by a sufficient number of staff, often receiving one to one care. Sensitive planning ensures that regular staff members provide consistency, enabling children and young people to develop good relationships and attachments with those who support them. The care staff team report that they are assisted to do their job well with regular training, supervision and management support.

The general health and wellbeing of children and young people is promoted through nutritious diet and exercise. Competitions and themed menus encourage different meals to be sampled, widening the food groups for those with limited diets. All meals are provided from a central school kitchen, though some young people have the opportunity to shop for and cook their own meal one night a week. Young people enjoy this activity. It helps them to develop their communication and independent living skills.

Children and young people are regularly consulted about life at school and in the

residential provision. Open discussions occur at meal times and more formally through the school council. Their opinions are valued and acted upon. For example, a young person expressed concern about the uneven path around the school site posing a hazard. This led to a full assessment followed by maintenance to make the path even and safe.

Young people are supported well in preparing for their adult life and to maximise their independence. The college provision on site offers opportunities for work experience and training within a learning environment. As young people become young adults, there are opportunities for them to move into supported accommodation close to the campus. This extended stay enables young people to gradually increase their independence while the support and facilities of the Foundation remain available to them.

## **The quality of care and support**

### **Requires Improvement**

Care planning arrangements have improved since the last inspection. A collection of bespoke therapy programmes contribute to the overall delivery of care. The use of an information management system has led to a uniformed approach to care planning. However, this system does not present the plan in a format that can be easily understood by children, young people and their parents.

For the children and young people at this school, there are many strengths in the quality of care provided. For example, the thorough and sensitive admission process enables children and young people to transition into this school at a pace comfortable to them and their families. The multi-disciplinary assessments undertaken prior to placement ensure that suitable therapy programmes, communication and mobility aids are in place before a child's arrival.

Ongoing support and assessment by a range of therapists promote individual targets for children and young people. Programmes and strategies encourage them to become independent, gain in confidence to accept and manage their visual impairment, and to improve their skills in communication. Adults who work in the school promote a 'can do' attitude in supporting children and young people to have aspirations and succeed.

Children and young people are provided with opportunities to develop and further their individual skills. Music, sport and the use of technology are popular interests. The on-site radio station enables budding presenters to entertain and use the sound systems. Young people excitedly report that this interest has led to a connection with a national radio station and a visit to London to meet the presenters. Other young people enjoy participating in, and watching, sport; with aspirations to complete the London Marathon and take part in the Ten Tor challenge. This level of participation and access to the local community demonstrates how equality of opportunity is promoted. Children and young people are fully supported in breaking down any barriers posed by their disabilities.

The school curriculum stretches into the evening with a varied activity programme and options for free time. Children and young people make good use of the facilities on site

such as a running track, a swimming pool and a music room.

Therapists meet with children and young people during the school day and in the evenings. This ensures that the most appropriate equipment and aids are available in the residential accommodation, as well as the classroom, and that care staff are trained in their use. The residential accommodation is located in old buildings without a lift. Children and young people with mobility use bedrooms on the first floor leaving ground floor bedrooms available for wheelchair users. The accommodation is well maintained and bedrooms are personalised to meet individual needs.

## How well children and young people are protected

## Inadequate

Safeguarding concerns identified by staff are not always passed to managers. When such concerns are passed on there are examples of managers failing to take appropriate action. Body maps provide a visual record of bruises and injuries on children and young people that requires further investigation and monitoring. Managers who monitor body maps sign to say they have seen them yet fail to escalate any concerns to senior managers and the safeguarding team. It is unclear from the records held if children and young people receive additional support or medical attention when injuries or bruising are noted.

Management oversight of the use of physical intervention is inadequate. The head of care has signed the physical intervention forms without any evidence of seeking further clarification of the incidents. On one occasion, a member of staff intervened that led to them and the child falling to the floor. The report lists injuries to the staff member yet fails to report any detail about the child other than to state they 'will probably have bruises'. There is no body map linked to this incident. Monitoring fails to ensure that children and young people are helped and protected after an incident of physical intervention.

Written records of physical intervention are poor. Seven out of eight records produced since February 2015 are reported inaccurately. The template to record a physical intervention is confusing and does not assist staff in producing a clear account of the incident. The time and duration of the intervention is not routinely recorded and when physical intervention is used, the records do not always state the type of hold used. The poor quality of recording suggests that staff are confused about what behaviour management techniques to use and are unclear on how to complete the form.

Individual behaviour support plans list known behaviours and provide strategies for staff on how to respond. Some aspects of these plans are very informative and promote the use of de-escalation to calm children and young people when they are distressed. A behaviour support plan that lists the stripping of clothes as a known behaviour by a child fails to provide adequate guidance for staff on how to respond sensitively when this happens. The absence of a clear strategy for such behaviour places staff, children and

young people at risk of an allegation in such a vulnerable situation. It also seriously compromises a child's right to support being provided in a dignified manner.

The child protection policy approved by the senior management team in June 2015 includes reference to guidance that is out of date. A further revision of the policy in October 2015 failed to recognise updates in many statutory guidance documents issued by the Department for Education, such as *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (July 2015). Leaders, managers, the trustees and staff do not have effective systems to alert them to important local and national changes in the field of child protection. Consequently they are neither informed, nor following current statutory guidance.

The staff team all receive training in child protection and there are eight designated safeguarding leads across the campus, creating a safeguarding team. This team meets regularly and discusses any reported concerns. This good practice is in stark contrast to some of the serious shortfalls found during this inspection, where managers have failed to escalate concerns to the safeguarding team.

Discussions and projects about safety occur through lessons, group work and time with a keyworker. This includes talking about bullying, relationships and e-safety. Children and young people say they can talk to staff if they are worried or upset and many can name the members of the safeguarding team, as promoted through posters. Details of ChildLine and other external agencies are provided in Braille.

Staff selection and recruitment procedures are robust. All checks are in place before new members of staff commence work to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and young people. Effective risk assessments and robust health and safety checks contribute to a safe site for children, young people, staff and visitors. Improvements to fire safety include liaison with the local fire service, personal emergency evacuation plans, increase in staff training and a review of the procedures.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers** **Inadequate**

Leadership and management of the residential provision are inadequate. Managers fail to provide effective oversight of records. Information recorded is not collated and analysed or followed up with relevant agencies, including safeguarding concerns.

Internal monitoring and communication arrangements are weak. Senior leaders devise action plans following inspection and monitoring visits, these contribute to the overall development plans for the Foundation. Such plans lack sufficient detail for ongoing self-assessment against the national minimum standards.

Representatives of the trustees visit to monitor the residential provision. These visits occur with sufficient frequency to meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools yet they lack challenge and rigour. Trustees sign written records to indicate they have seen these, yet this does not always provoke further questioning as to the safety and welfare of children and young people.

A comprehensive review of staffing has led to a new working pattern of shifts. This was implemented in September 2015 after extensive consultation with staff. Care staff no

longer work split shifts and consequently children and young people receive more consistency of care. Staff support children and young people either from, waking to the end of the school day, or from after school through to bedtime. This change in working hours led to some staff feeling unsettled for a while however, most of those spoken to at this inspection report that overall the new system is much better.

Formal supervision of residential staff and managers lacks any reflection on their practice; an area for improvement by the staff with supervisory responsibilities. Members of staff are very enthusiastic about their role in supporting children and young people. They smile as they talk about the progress children and young people make and the enjoyment they get from working at this school. With the new rota there are regular training sessions on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons. This enables staff to readily attend training.

The professional development of care staff is mapped to a competency framework. In addition the majority of care staff are qualified to level 3 in childcare or equivalent. The therapists and specialists in visual impairment provide regular training sessions and are accessible to staff for consultation. This promotes the correct delivery of support through personalised programmes of speech therapy, physiotherapy and sensory stimulation

Leaders and managers welcome parents and carers into school and promote working together. Annual review meetings record positive feedback from parents and more regularly through home to school diaries. Parents readily comment on the progress their child is making, the increase in confidence and ability in their learning. Ofsted Parent View invited contributions towards this inspection. However, the response rate was less than ten and therefore not published.

This school is pioneering an assessment and intervention framework to support children and young people with a cortical visual impairment (CVI). Since this model was introduced in January 2015, children and young people better understand the vision they have to assist in their learning and are making significant improvements. This CVI project is one of many that this school is involved with as they actively participate in research and technology to support visual impairments.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113652
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC022223
<b>DfE registration number</b>	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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	17
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	4 to17
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tracy de Bernhardt Dunkin
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	10/02/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 454 200
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