

Wesc Foundation School

Countess Wear, Exeter, Devon EX2 6HA

Inspection dates

5–6 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school continues to provide a good standard of education for pupils with visual impairment, many of whom have additional complex medical or special educational needs.
- Governance by the board of trustees has improved since the previous inspection and is now making a strong contribution to the school's further development.
- The curriculum, supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, is well designed to meet individual pupils' needs.
- The school's system to monitor pupils' achievement is effective in tracking their progress towards meeting their targets, although its use needs to be more consistently embedded.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and can set work which challenges them, whatever their starting points.
- Teachers help pupils to develop good oral and written communication skills, including by the use of Braille. This is well supported, where necessary, by effective use of appropriate enabling or assistive technology.
- Pupils make good progress across all the key stages in the school, often from very low starting points.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and behave well. In particular, they show a high degree of respect for each other.
- For students in the sixth form, their 16 to 19 study programmes make a strong contribution to preparing them for independent living and the world of work.
- Work-related learning is strong, although the range of work experience opportunities could be wider, including in the sixth form.
- The evaluation of teaching does not place enough emphasis on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time. Recording of the monitoring of teaching is not consistent enough.
- When restraint is used, leaders do not put sufficient emphasis on pupils' own views when they analyse any incident of physical intervention.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching are systematically followed and recorded
 - monitoring of the use of restraint puts appropriate emphasis on the opinions of pupils.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - procedures to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress are consistently embedded across the school
 - monitoring and evaluation of teaching put greater emphasis on the impact on pupils' progress over time.
- Improve pupils' personal development by widening the range of work experience opportunities for them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, including trustees, have ensured that the school continues to provide a good standard of education to pupils across all key stages. Leaders are ambitious for their pupils and focus well on preparing them for the next stages of their lives.
- The school's curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of pupils, whatever their starting points. Teaching is broadly organised into two streams. One caters for pupils with visual impairment and moderate learning difficulties, the other for pupils with more complex sensory and medical needs. Curriculum planning is very clear across both streams, with therapy sessions integrated into the school day. As a consequence of this clarity of design, the curriculum enables pupils to make good progress, whatever the degree of their visual impairment or complexity of their medical needs.
- The curriculum is enhanced and enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as camping trips or the chance to work in the school's radio studio. These extra-curricular activities play an important role in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including in preparing them for independent living once they leave the school.
- Leaders make sure that fundamental British values are actively promoted in the school. Mutual respect is modelled at all times by staff in their interactions with pupils. Tolerance for all religious faiths is promoted through tutor group activities, assemblies and in lessons. The school council allows pupils to develop an understanding of the principles and practice of democracy. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have established an effective system of monitoring pupils' progress against their individual targets, which ultimately derive from their education, health and care plans. This system is particularly good at measuring the progress made by pupils with very low starting points and whose attainment is likely to remain very low in absolute terms. By clearly identifying meaningful targets, the system allows for even quite small steps in, for example, attention or memory to be recorded and evaluated. Nevertheless, the system still needs further embedding so that information is recorded in a consistent and timely fashion across the school.
- Leaders ensure that funding is used appropriately to support pupils, all of whom have either an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs and are placed at the school by their local authority. Some disadvantaged pupils are also eligible for the pupil premium. The school uses this additional funding well to help these pupils make progress by providing training for staff or purchasing appropriate resources.
- Leaders have introduced a system to monitor the quality of teaching across the school via lesson observation and peer evaluation. However, these procedures do not place a great enough emphasis on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive training to help them carry out their roles. Particular focus is placed on training staff to deal with the increasing proportion of pupils with multi-sensory and complex medical needs. Leaders' understanding of the needs of these pupils is good and they identify appropriate training for staff.

Governance of the school

- The quality of governance of the school has improved in recent years. Since the previous inspection in 2014, the membership of the board of trustees has completely changed. This process has allowed the trustees to increase the capacity of the board to support and challenge the school, an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Trustees bring useful professional experience to their roles, including from the education sector, and this allows them to hold school leaders to account effectively. For example, the critical support provided by governors led school leaders to refine their recently rewritten teaching and learning policy.
- Trustees have a good understanding of the school and the opportunities and challenges it currently faces. The school's intake has changed greatly in recent years, with a much higher proportion of pupils arriving with multi-sensory impairment or very complex medical needs. In addition, changes to the approach that local authorities have to placing young people in special schools has led to a reduction in the number of pupils on roll. Trustees, however, have a very clear-sighted strategic plan for how the school will respond to this changing situation and to ensure that the school remains on a secure footing.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and the procedures they should follow if they have any concerns. Typically, referrals to outside agencies are made in a correct and timely manner. On the occasions when restraint is used, it is used appropriately, although the records do not put sufficient emphasis on the views of the pupils concerned.
- The school site is very large, but access is well controlled and monitored closely.
- The school follows the principles of safer recruitment thoroughly when employing new teaching staff. All the required pre-employment checks are carried out prior to appointment. Some omissions from the single central record were corrected during the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. As a result of effective teaching over time, pupils make good progress towards their individual targets. For the most able, teaching is successful in preparing them for public examinations or other forms of accredited qualifications.
- Teachers and other staff, known in the school as enablers, know their pupils very well indeed. They understand the details of their particular needs and are able to plan learning well so that these needs are met. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and they provide a strong foundation upon which teaching, learning and assessment can build.
- Teaching is good at developing positive attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy learning and want to do well. They listen respectfully to each other and are considerate and patient

if a classmate is having difficulty expressing their views. As a consequence of effective teaching, therefore, classrooms are calm and positive environments, conducive to learning.

- Work-related learning is a strong aspect of the curriculum. Teachers have a good understanding of the skills that visually impaired pupils will need to thrive independently in the workplace. Where appropriate, for example, money-handling skills are developed well in mathematics.
- Teaching successfully embeds the core skills of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. For example, in horticulture, pupils develop their mathematical skills, such as measurement, by applying them in practical contexts. Reading is developed well in dedicated skills lessons and also in timetabled 'reading for pleasure' sessions.
- Teachers make good use of enabling or assistive technology, where appropriate, which allows pupils with visual or other kinds of impairment to get more actively involved in their learning. Teaching of Braille is successful in developing this skill in pupils for whom it would be useful.
- When it is used effectively, the tracking system allows teachers to record the progress pupils make towards meeting their targets clearly and efficiently. This allows teaching to be constantly refined in light of the rate of progress pupils are making.
- The school provides parents with very clear annual reports, in which teachers explain clearly the progress their child is making, including towards attaining externally validated qualifications where relevant.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school rightly places the highest emphasis on preparing pupils for independent living in all its aspects. As a result, over time, pupils' self-confidence and self-belief increase. Older pupils relish the increased independence they develop, such as travelling on their own to and from their work experience placements.
- Pupils have developed a good understanding of how to be a successful learner. They focus well on work in class and are committed to doing their best. They enjoy learning and want to do well.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being is promoted very effectively. Many pupils have medical therapy built into their daily timetables and this increases, for example, their mobility. Pupils' ability to understand their feelings and emotions is promoted well through the curriculum, for example in personal, social and health education. The school uses its on-site swimming pool well to meet both the therapeutic and the recreational needs of pupils.
- The school's programme of work-related learning plays a large role in promoting pupils' personal development. The Wesc Foundation runs a number of social enterprises in the form of charity shops, and pupils can gain valuable work experience in them. Other opportunities for work experience are also available, although these are also chiefly in

the retail sector. A wider range of work experience would enhance pupils' personal development even further.

- Pupils have access to good-quality, independent careers guidance, which helps them to make informed choices about the next stages of their education, training or employment.
- Pupils report that there is little or no bullying in the school, and they are confident that staff would deal with it well if it did occur.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and there is very little disruption in classrooms or around the school. If behavioural incidents do occur, teachers and other staff deal with them very effectively, using established de-escalation techniques.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to staff. They show respect for other pupils' contributions to lessons and listen politely to the views of others.
- Historically, pupils' rates of absence and persistent absence have been high. This is largely related to the nature of pupils' medical needs. Attendance records for the current year show that there has been an improvement in attendance over the year, especially in recent months.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects and in all key stages. As a result of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils typically have low prior attainment, in some cases very low. All have education, health and care plans linked to visual impairment and often to other complex medical conditions. Nonetheless, the school identifies meaningful targets for these pupils and they make good progress towards achieving them.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress over time. They go on to achieve appropriate accredited qualifications at entry level, level 1 or level 2, such as unit awards or functional skills qualifications. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education, training or employment. Effective work-related learning and good careers education add to the strength of this preparation.
- For a significant number of pupils with very low prior attainment, key outcomes are measured in terms of improved attention, memory, emotional understanding or motivation, rather than in terms of nationally expected standards reached or qualifications gained. The school's internal tracking confirms inspectors' own findings that these pupils make good progress towards meaningful targets in these key areas.
- The school has a much higher proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium than nationally. Funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent appropriately on staff training and assistive technology, which increases the ability of the pupils to make progress by facilitating greater access to the curriculum. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is in line with that of others with the same starting points.

- Pupils develop their reading skills well. Pupils for whom it is appropriate acquire Braille to help them develop their reading and writing skills further.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership in key stage 5 has ensured that the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are met. The most able students' programmes consist of an appropriate mixture of academic and/or vocational qualifications up to level 2, work experience and additional non-qualification work on personal development. For some students with more complex needs, however, programmes focus on work experience and preparation for employment and independent adult life more generally.
- Students in the post-16 provision at the school are usually taught alongside younger pupils, with groupings determined by ability rather than age. This allows teachers to set work at the requisite level of challenge for these students' starting points and enables the students to make good progress on their 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Well-designed study programmes make a strong contribution to students' good personal development, behaviour and welfare. The programmes enable students to acquire the skills necessary to move successfully forward into further education, training or employment.
- Outcomes in key stage 5 are good. As they do in the rest of the school, students make good progress towards the personal targets that link to their education, health and care plans. The most able attain qualifications at levels appropriate to their ability. These are usually at level 1 and level 2. There are no students studying level 3 qualifications in the school.
- Students without GCSE English and mathematics continue to make good progress in developing their skills in these subjects. Where appropriate, they are entered for qualifications as determined by their current level of attainment and rate of progress.
- Students receive very effective careers advice and guidance as part of their study programmes. This takes full account of students' own interests and aspirations and makes a strong contribution to preparing students for life once they leave the school. The school also makes good use of supported internships to help prepare students for employment.
- The retention of students on study programmes is good. Most students complete their programme of study.
- As it is in the rest of the school, safeguarding in relation to the 16 to 19 study programmes is effective.

School details

Unique reference number	113652
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10032525

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	21
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Noel Fowler
Principal	Tracy De Bernhardt Dunkin
Telephone number	01392 454200
Website	www.wescfoundation.ac.uk
Email address	info@wescfoundation.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 July 2014

Information about this school

- Wesc Foundation School is a non-maintained special school for pupils with visual impairment, situated in large grounds on the outskirts of Exeter.
- The board of trustees of the Wesc Foundation exercises its role as the appropriate authority through a local governing body made up of trustees and other members, such as parent and staff governors. The chair of the board of trustees is also chair of the local governing body.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. A large proportion of them are also eligible for free school meals.

- All pupils are placed at the school by their local authorities.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place alongside a separate inspection of the school's residential provision, which will result in a separate report.
- Inspectors observed learning in lessons in the company of the principal and other senior leaders. During these observations, they took the opportunity to examine pupils' work and to talk to them about their learning. In addition, further samples of work were examined.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with senior leaders and other staff throughout the inspection. The lead inspector spoke to the chair of the board of trustees by telephone.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was scrutinised, including the school's key policies. The lead inspector also examined the school's safeguarding records.
- One inspector met with the school council. Inspectors also took into account 10 responses to the parental survey. There were 32 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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