

New College Worcester

New College, 2 Whittington Road, Worcester WR5 2JX

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

New College Worcester is a non-maintained special school. It provides education and care for up to 71 children aged between 11 and 19 years who are blind or vision impaired and may also have additional needs. Children can access the national curriculum and progress to study beyond the age of 16.

At the time of this inspection, 40 children were accessing the residential provision.

Most children stay in the residential provision on a termly or weekly basis. Accommodation is provided in three residential houses, all located on campus.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 February 2026

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers outstanding

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 25 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit significantly from attending the school's residential provision. The atmosphere across the setting is warm and welcoming. Relationships between staff and children are nurturing, and children are consistently treated with respect and valued as individuals.

Children are settled and have friends. For some children, this is the first time they have had a genuine sense of belonging in a school community. Children enjoy social opportunities with residential and day pupils, who regularly join them for activities and evening meals. This helps children develop and sustain meaningful peer relationships.

New children experience well-planned introductions. Children say they feel welcomed and are supported to settle quickly into familiar routines. They speak positively about the structure, routines, predictability and opportunities offered.

Residential and education staff work collaboratively to provide a consistent approach to children's care. Staff spend time in the school to observe teaching practice and develop their skills. Carefully planned programmes, delivered at each child's pace, help children develop important life skills. As a result, children can access the community independently, such as using public transport, shopping, managing their money, cooking, and washing laundry. Children take pride in their achievements.

Children benefit from a wide range of activities and experiences inside and outside the school. Staff routinely consult children about their interests and preferences and use this information to plan evening and weekend activities.

Children have access to on-site sporting and social clubs. Staff are proactive in helping children experience a wide variety of activities in the school and the community. For example, children enjoy opportunities such as skiing, theatre trips, attending sports events, swimming and attending youth clubs. However, for one child, opportunities to participate in community-based activities have been less frequent.

Staff actively encourage children to express their views and participate in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions relating to their future plans, as well as everyday choices, such as food preferences and room layout to support children with vision impairments. Staff listen carefully, take action where appropriate, and advocate strongly for children when needed.

Multidisciplinary working is well established. Key professionals, such as the clinical and health staff, contribute effectively to children's care planning. The school nurse plays a central role in coordinating health support and ensuring that staff receive the

necessary training to administer medication safely. They also promote children's independence to manage their health, helping them prepare for adulthood.

When children experience difficulties, staff respond quickly and sensitively. For example, following a bereavement, staff provided consistent emotional support and ensured that the child had timely access to counselling and pastoral services.

A programme of refurbishment is underway across the residential accommodation. These improvements have had a positive impact on children's experiences. The increased availability of single rooms, some with en-suite facilities, has enhanced privacy and comfort. The upgraded environment promotes greater independence and supports social development.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The school demonstrates a strong and sustained commitment to safeguarding. Leaders place a clear emphasis on training, accountability and reflective practice. As a result, all staff have an improved understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and are confident in identifying and responding to concerns.

Staff have built positive relationships with children. This has enabled children to identify trusted adults whom they can approach to discuss worries or express concerns. Staff promptly respond to any issues children raise and share them with relevant professionals.

All staff focus on helping children understand the risks associated with their disabilities and the wider community. Children are helped to develop the knowledge and confidence required to keep themselves safe while increasing their independence.

Online safety is prioritised and reinforced across the education and residential settings. Staff remain vigilant to children's online activity through observations, discussions and monitoring. The school's Wi-Fi parental controls provide additional protection for children. When potential concerns arise, staff speak with children to help them understand risks and develop safer ways to protect themselves when online.

Some children experience challenges with their mental health, including risks of self-harm. There are clear and safe systems in place to support them. Staff involve children in discussions about how they wish to be supported and provide tailored strategies, including access to support networks, guidance and practical tools, such as self-soothe boxes.

Children's behaviour is positive. They are polite, considerate and respectful towards one another. Incidents of children going missing or the use of restraint are rare. Children have not gone missing from the school or residential settings, and staff have not needed to use physical intervention to keep children safe.

The residential provision benefits from external health and safety assessments, alongside internal systems for monitoring and maintenance. This ensures that the environment remains safe and adaptations are in place to meet children's diverse needs.

An external specialist carries out an annual fire risk assessment. At the time of the inspection, the action plan did not show how the shortfalls had been resolved. Leaders reviewed this during the inspection and took action to address the high-risk priorities. Several actions are outstanding but remain within required timescales. However, this does not affect children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the senior leadership team including the appointment of a new head of care. These changes have resulted in a sharper focus on what matters most for residential pupils. There is now a culture of greater openness and collaboration across the school. As a result, senior leaders, care staff, teaching staff, governors, external professionals and parents/carers work effectively together. There have been improvements in information sharing and listening to the views of others.

The new head of care has brought fresh ideas, energy and a clear focus on improving children's care experiences. She has introduced new training and embedded a therapeutic and nurturing approach across the team. This has enabled children to receive individualised, relationship-based care, helping them build trusting and positive relationships with the adults who support them.

Leaders have reflected on children's experiences and have begun a significant refurbishment programme across the residential houses. This ongoing work is improving the quality of the environment and enhancing children's comfort and independence.

There is a strong, shared commitment from all staff to help children achieve their potential. Leaders have established a coherent and focused approach, with staff working collaboratively across departments for the benefit of children. Teaching staff support independence programmes after the school day to do follow-up work with children to further enhance their independence skills. Residential staff go into classrooms and share their knowledge. This approach supports consistency and greater progress for children. In addition, the senior leadership team and non-teaching staff contribute to off-site trips and activities, strengthening a sense of community across the school.

Leaders listen to children's views and act on their suggestions. For example, when children proposed a sponsored walk, leaders facilitated this and supported it to grow into a school event with participation from pupils, staff and parents, raising funds for a charity. This promoted a strong sense of achievement and unity.

Leaders advocate strongly for children, particularly when they believe that placing authorities are not fulfilling their responsibilities. They ensure that children's voices are heard and that their needs remain central to planning and decision-making.

Induction and training for staff have been strengthened considerably. Training is now more comprehensive and includes a balance of mandatory and child-specific training with a strong focus on nurturing and therapeutic approaches. Staff access regular training on relevant topics when new behaviours or concerns emerge. Leaders swiftly identify and provide additional training to equip staff with the knowledge and skills they need. Staff consistently report feeling supported, valued and respected by leaders and colleagues.

Feedback from parents and professionals is overwhelmingly positive, with particular praise directed towards the new head of care for the improvements she has driven and the confidence she has inspired.

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

Points for improvement

- Leaders should ensure that staff find creative ways to help students who are not accessing the wider community to have social opportunities away from the school.
- Leaders should ensure that any recommendations raised in fire risk assessments are promptly addressed.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: SC043048

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Rachel Perks

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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