

Boston College

Inspection report for further education college

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Boston Further Education College is situated close to the town centre of Boston on the east coast of Lincolnshire. It is a market town with a range of amenities and rail links to Lincoln, Nottingham, Cambridge and London. The college has 1700 full-time students aged between 16 and 19. There are approximately 160 international students from Europe and Asia, and approximately 50 students are under the age of 18. Students can choose to live in the halls of residence on one of the college campuses, or stay with local families vetted by the college. There are around 25 home stay families approved. The halls of residence are made up of 20 flats with between two and 10 study bedrooms in each. All flats have free internet access. Kitchen and bathroom facilities are shared. Students can choose to be either self-catering, or eat meals in the college. A warden lives in a flat in the halls of residence.

Summary

This announced inspection was conducted as part of the planned inspection programme. Most National Minimum Standards were assessed. Students accommodated by the college benefit from excellent welfare provision. They are well supported by a range of services across the college. New students receive excellent induction and orientation. Students are able to influence the way that the college is run and the facilities provided. Equality and diversity are key college priorities and international students are seen as integral to the college. Students are protected by robust policies for child protection, complaints and the prevention of bullying. Students say that they feel safe living at the college or home stay provisions and benefit from gaining skills and independence. The college is well organised and managed and key staff involved in the welfare of international students communicate effectively with each other.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations from the previous visit conducted by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The student's welcome pack outlines the college rules and the law relating to smoking, drinking and illegal substances. The college will take disciplinary action against students found breaking the rules. Students behaviour and conduct is monitored by the wardens and cleaners will report any issues of concern. The college arranges for students to register with a local doctors surgery. The Accommodation Officer will assist students to make appointments. If there are out of hours emergencies, the wardens or security guards will contact paramedics or arrange for the student to be taken to the nearby hospital. Information about medical arrangements is included in the welcome pack together with the contact details for NHS Direct. Student's initial application forms identify any medical conditions and all medical interventions are recorded in a medical file. Three counsellors are employed to offer a free confidential service to students with personal or emotional problems. Students that are ill are supported according to their wishes. The college does not have a sick bay and students will be supported by their flatmates, wardens, cleaners and the Accommodation Officer if they become ill. Students in home stay accommodation will

be monitored by their landlord or landlady. There are two medical rooms in the college and some staff, including the caretaking staff receive first aid training. Students commented that they are satisfied with the medical support that they receive. The college nurse operates a confidential 'Health Advice Shop' which offers a drop in or appointment service once a week on each main campus. Students can access the service for sexual health advice, contraception and alcohol, smoking, drugs and diet advice. Students may approach the student services department directly if the nurse is not available for emergency contraception. Students have widely differing views on the standard of food provided. Students choose catered or self-catering accommodation when applying for a course. Those choosing catered accommodation are given vouchers which they can spend in one of the three restaurants or canteens on the two main campuses. Many students complained that the food was 'too fatty' with few vegetables. However, although fatty snacks are provided, there is clear evidence that healthy options and vegetables are available at affordable prices. The catering manager explained that the canteen has to respond to student demand, and the most popular menu items are chips, burgers, bacon sandwiches and lasagne.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Students are protected by clear anti bullying and child protection policies. Bullying within the college is not identified as a problem by students, although some say that they have experienced hostility from local people when in town. Bullying between students is dealt with under the college disciplinary rules. The college has a designated child protection officer who is responsible for staff training and updating policies. There are five other staff who have attended local authority training. The college provides child protection training for all staff at least every two to three years. Students say that they feel safe in college accommodation and have no concerns. The college operates a good disciplinary system with colour coded report card depending on the seriousness of the issue. Targets are agreed between the student and the college and they are reviewed throughout the week. If the student fails to comply or reach targets the matter can be referred to the college disciplinary panel, with ultimate sanctions of a final warning, stay with conditions or dismissal from the college. Grievances about the disciplinary system are dealt with by the student services office. Behavioural expectations and house rules are set out in the welcome pack and student handbook. The complaints procedure is outlined in the student handbook. Efforts are made to try to resolve complaints informally, but the college has staff trained in complaint investigation to deal with formal complaints. Students say that they have confidence in staff to take complaints seriously and that informal complaints about internet access and stolen food have been resolved. Regular fire checks and fire equipment servicing are carried out in the halls of residence. However, several flats were found to have fire doors propped open with fire extinguishers. There are scorch marks on storage heaters in some hallways where students have left letters. This practice is believed to have stopped and cleaning staff are vigilant in ensuring that heaters are kept clear. Students confirm that staff respect their privacy and personal space. Cleaners have weekly access to bedrooms on pre-arranged days. Staff will usually only access rooms if they have cause for concern such as a student going missing. There are robust procedures for the recruitment of staff and the vetting of visitors. All staff with access to the halls of residence have enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks prior to commencing employment. Gaps in employment history are explored and references are verified if doubtful. The Accommodation Officer arranges for CRB checks to be carried out for home stay providers and other family members. All visitors are asked to sign in and are given an identity badge. Student accommodation is secure with locks on front doors

and individual flat doors. All ground floor windows are fitted with window locks, alarms and reflective film. A security firm provides cover for the college site during evenings and part of the night. Wardens also live on site. There are rules for students to follow if they invite guests into the accommodation. Closed circuit television monitoring is used in external areas close to the accommodation and this does not compromise student's privacy. There are good arrangements for reporting hazards and maintenance requests. Electrical testing of portable appliances is conducted annually. This includes equipment brought in by students. Cleaning materials are securely stored and there are suitable precautions against Legionella.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The college is situated close to the town centre and students can access facilities there. Students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with facilities as part of their induction. The Accommodation Officer and the student services office can put students in touch with local clubs and organisations to pursue any hobbies or interests. The college and the student union organise activities and outings throughout the year. Students have access to twice weekly sports meetings although some complained that these are organised in study time. They also have access to free swimming facilities and a half price gym. Students have access to college sports facilities such as the gym, football pitch and hard court. The halls of residence common room is open in the evening. Computer facilities are available to students in the library and all bedrooms have free internet access. Students receive good personal support from a range of staff within the college. This includes the Accommodation Officer, personal tutors, wardens and staff in the international office and student services. Students praise the support they receive and say that a range of individuals rather than one contact point gives them choice to approach who they feel most comfortable with. The college has developed a clear equality and diversity action plan. There is an equal opportunities policy and staff intervene if discrimination is suspected. There is a long history of accommodating international students and they are seen as integral to the college. There is a mix of ethnicity in accommodation and young people are encouraged to integrate with each other and other students. Special events are held to promote better understanding of cultures. This included a 'One World Week' during which international students engaged in a range of activities with primary school children aimed at raising their awareness of different cultures.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Students are well represented and able to contribute to the operation of residential accommodation. International class representatives meet every term to discuss issues such as food, information, sports and activities and any areas for improvement. Three 'Student Perception of Course' (SPOC) surveys are completed each year to obtain feedback from all students. In addition, international students are surveyed twice yearly. A number of improvements have been made as a result of these surveys. Most students have mobile telephones and can maintain contact with family and friends using these, or emails and letters. Two payphones are situated outside the halls of residence. Progress reports are sent to parents twice a year and parents can contact the international office if they have concerns. Family members may visit the college if they are in the country and a home stay provider has accommodated family members in the past. There are excellent arrangements to support students when they first arrive at college. Transport is arranged from airports and the welcome

booklet gives good information about the induction procedure. All students have an English diagnostic test on arrival. During induction students are registered with doctors, assisted to set up bank accounts and introduced to each other and staff members. Trips are organised to orientate students in the local community and further afield. Students are supported with careers advice when they leave the college. The college holds the British Council Beacon Award and the assessors commented, 'the international operation at the college supports learners at every stage of the process from pre entry to exit'. Students confirm that they have a good relationship with key staff, who they say are friendly and supportive.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Student accommodation is arranged in a way that prevents big differences in ages. Flats can be mixed or single gender. Accommodation is planned according to students' wishes and younger female students will be grouped in single sex flats if requested. Parental consent is sought if there are any issues with sharing. There is no risk assessment for where children and younger adults are accommodated together but a letter to parents states that students under 18 will usually be placed together. Students say that accommodation is generally comfortable and well maintained. All accommodation is in single rooms. Each room is furnished and students have lockable facilities for storage of valuables. Students complained that the communal kitchens are cramped and the catered flats lack an oven and grill, so students have to sometimes use facilities in self-catering flats. There are sufficient toilet and bathing facilities. One flat is accessible to students that use wheelchairs. Students praised the quality of the home stay accommodation. Students will go into town nearby to buy any personal requisites. Food is available on site and there is a small shop with some supplies of essentials and stationary items. Light bulbs, toilet tissue and rubbish bags are available from the warden or security office out of hours. Students are encouraged to be as independent as possible in order to develop skills. Staff offer discrete support and encouragement to enable this. Students are responsible for their own laundry and a laundry room equipped with three washers and driers is situated on site. Home stay providers confirm that there is usually good information available about students before they arrive. The Accommodation Officer tries to ensure that students are suitably matched with the provider and their family. Health and safety checks are conducted on the premises and providers are responsible for obtaining gas safety certificates and smoke detectors. A portfolio of the placement is put together to ensure that information is available for prospective students. The Accommodation Officer maintains regular telephone contact with providers and an annual meeting is held for all home stay providers.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There is good information available for students and their families. A translated version of the prospectus is available for Chinese students. Students praise the information available, including the welcome pack and student guide. The college has designated members of staff responsible for the welfare of students under 18 years. Although the management structure of key staff is spread across different departments, staff say that it works well and there are no problems with accountability. All key staff attend International Committee Meetings every term to co-ordinate education and welfare and ensure effective communication and planning. Staff responsible for students attend induction training to prepare them for their role. Records relating to complaints, accidents and breaches in college discipline are reviewed. Students have

details of emergency procedures outlined in the welcome booklet. The college has plans to accommodate students in the event of a major incident such as fire in the halls of residence. Students receive the required individual level of supervision agreed between the college and parents. A warden and assistant warden live in the halls of residence and their contact numbers are displayed throughout the building. Both have job descriptions to clarify their roles and responsibilities. The warden is an ex student who has a good understanding of the support that students require. Students say that they are well supported out of hours and feel reassured by this support.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that students comply with fire precautions (NMS 24)
- arrange for risk assessments to be conducted where children are accommodated with younger adults (NMS 10).

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for further education college

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- under-age drinking, substance abuse and possession of obscene material by students are appropriately countered (NMS 6)
- students receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 14)
- students are adequately supervised when ill (NMS 15)
- students are supported in relation to any health or personal problems (NMS 16)
- students receive good quality catering provision (NMS 22)
- students have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals (NMS 23)
- students are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 43)

Ofsted considers 14 and 16 the key standards to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- students are protected from bullying and harassment (NMS 2)
- students are protected from abuse (NMS 3)
- use of discipline with students is fair and appropriate (NMS 4)
- students' complaints are adequately responded to (NMS 5)
- students are protected from the risk of fire (NMS 24)
- the welfare of any young people accommodated by the college other than its own students is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 26)
- students' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities (NMS 27)
- students' personal privacy is respected (NMS 33)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with residential students (NMS 34)
- students are protected from unsupervised contact with adults who have not been, subject to the college's complete recruitment checking procedures (NMS 35)
- students have their own living accommodation, secure from public intrusion (NMS 37)
- any security or surveillance measures provide security to protect students without compromising their privacy (NMS 38)
- students are given reasonable protection from safety hazards (NMS 42)

Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5, 24, 33, 34, 35, 37 and 42 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- students have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- students receive personal support from staff (NMS 13)
- students do not experience inappropriate discrimination (NMS 17)
- student welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands (NMS 25)
- students have access to a range of recreational areas (NMS 41)

Ofsted considers 13 and 17 the key standards to be inspected.

Annex A

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- students are enabled to contribute to the operation of residential provision in the college (NMS 12)
- students can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 18)
- students receive guidance, both on arrival at the college and in preparing to leave the college (NMS 20)
- there are sound relationships between staff and students (NMS 32)

Ofsted considers 12 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the college's organisation of residential provision safeguards students' welfare (NMS 10)
- students' personal possessions and money are protected (NMS 19)
- students are provided with satisfactory living accommodation (NMS 36)
- students have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 39)
- students have adequate and adequately private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 40)
- there are arrangements to ensure that students' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered (NMS 44)
- students can buy food and personal requisites while accommodated at college (NMS 45)
- the welfare of students placed in lodgings by the college is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 46)
- the welfare of students is safeguarded and promoted when accommodated away from the college site on a short-stay basis (NMS 47)

Ofsted considers 46 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- a clear statement of the principles of residential provision and student support at the college is available to those needing this information (NMS 1)
- the safeguarding and promotion of students' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7)
- there is clear leadership of residential provision in the college (NMS 8)
- crises affecting students' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- risk assessment and college record keeping contribute to students' welfare (NMS 21)
- students are appropriately supervised during free time (NMS 28)
- students are adequately supervised by staff (NMS 29)
- staff responsible for residential students have specific residential and welfare duties, with adequate induction and continued training (NMS 30)
- students are looked after by staff following clear residential and welfare policies and practice (NMS 31)

Ofsted considers 1, 21, 29 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.