

Warwickshire College

Inspection report for further education college

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Inspector	Julian Mason
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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

Warwickshire College is a large provider of further and higher education. Currently, the college operates over six campuses although only three provide residential accommodation for students. Over 600 students are accommodated at the college's Moreton Morrell, Leamington Spa and Pershore sites. At the time of this inspection about 120 students under the age of 18 were being accommodated.

Summary

This was a full announced inspection that concentrated on key national minimum standards for accommodation of students under the age of 18. The inspection focused on areas relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic wellbeing and how staffing and management arrangements supported the operation of the college.

The overall judgement for Warwickshire College is good with a number of outstanding features. Students are provided with very good support from a professional and conscientious team of staff. The college's core values are promoted well in practice, which means that all students are treated fairly and equally. Students feel safe on all college campuses and this adds value to their learning and residential experiences. College managers provide supportive and effective leadership which results in staff being clearly focused and guided in the support they provide to students. Some shortfalls in the staff vetting processes exist which slightly undermines the college's overall approach to the safer recruitment and selection of staff.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The college has taken action to address 10 of the 11 recommendations made at the last inspection in 2006. Improvements have been made to: consultation processes, care planning, the provision of meals, behaviour management training, food safety and the use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV). These recommendations have been actioned. One recommendation has been repeated that relates to staff vetting processes.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Students good health and wellbeing is actively promoted by a range of competent and professional staff. There are many health related benefits that students gain because of the way in which services are organised and delivered. In particular, students gain valuable information through their induction into college life that helps them know about available services and how to stay fit and healthy. This good start is reinforced and consolidated by a range of ongoing educational activities that encourage a greater awareness of how to prevent illness and poor health. Students across the campuses have access to a designated college nurse, with students at the Moreton Morrell site having more choice and opportunity to actually visit this service. Students identified this as a very beneficial aspect of living on this particular campus.

Students are provided with a good range of quality food which encourages and supports a varied and healthy diet. Good communication and consultation processes are in place that provide students with opportunities to feedback and influence the operation of the different refectories and the meals provided. The college also provides lots of information about healthy eating and promotes this well. One student commenting: 'They have plenty of healthy options available and advice posters'. Another student from a different campus stating: 'Happy with the quality of the food, its attractive in appearance and tastes good.' These arrangements are supported by staff who demonstrate a clear understanding of the principles of healthy eating and diet. They also promote a range of world foods through themed mealtimes that embrace other cultures and countries.

Students day-to-day health and wellbeing is effectively promoted because there is good communication between medical and welfare staff at the college. These arrangements help ensure effective and timely support for students whilst keeping sensitive issues private and confidential. Staff are well equipped to respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs because they have been training in the use of first aid. The college takes a firm stance regarding the use of alcohol and under age drinking. For instance, staff are vigilant regarding the operation of the college bar and promotes its use sensibly and legally.

Students are provided with very good support in relation to any personal concerns or worries; they are able to confidently identify a range of ways that they can access advice and help. In addition, students have access to a confidential counselling service which works in partnership with a range of other welfare agencies and professionals to ensure students can access wider community services if they need to. This means that students have control and choice over the way in which they can access welfare information and services.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The college has a very good focus on safeguarding and protection with clear operational policies and procedures that are communicated effectively to promote the safety and welfare of all students. The college has strong leadership that consistently promotes an environment where safety is important. Students from all campuses say they feel safe with comments like: 'I always feel safe at the college' and 'there's always someone I can talk to'. Many students identified feeling safe because of the provision of CCTV, good lighting at night, limited access to residences and staff who are interested in their welfare.

Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in respect of keeping students safe. The college has designated child protection officers and all staff have attended up-to-date child protection training that is consistent with their role. These arrangements ensure that staff are aware of what action to take if they have concern or need to report a safeguarding matter.

Student privacy and confidentiality is promoted and respected. There are a number of policies that underpin and guide staff practice in this area. Students from all campuses expressed the view that personal information about them is kept safe and that staff work in a way that keeps personal matters confidential. Students and parents are provided with information in an appropriate format about how to make a complaint. Students are clear that staff listen to them if they have a complaint or concern. This is because college staff actively listen to students which also results in most complaints being resolved quickly and informally.

Students at all campuses are encouraged and supported to behave well and generally student behaviour is very good. This is because the college provides learning and living environments that are based on well promoted core values that in practical terms support positive relationships and academic success. Students are also supported to draw-up a set of rules at their induction to assist with defining reasonable boundaries and reinforcing expected standards of behaviour. There is very little bullying at the college which is not tolerated. Staff practice regarding student discipline is fair and consistent which matches student feedback that staff are 'reasonable'. The college has clear and appropriate policies and guidelines relating to behaviour and discipline. The welfare team have very good communication and information sharing systems to assist with maintaining consistent standards of behaviour throughout the college.

Student's health and safety is promoted well with a robust and systematic approach to assessing risks and taking actions to ensure the college campuses and residencies are safe. Young people learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they have regular opportunities to practice the evacuation of their residencies. Students demonstrate a very good understanding of the college's emergency procedures which helps to keep them safe. Student accommodation is safe and secure and the college demonstrates a vigilant approach to maintaining this for everyone. For example, newly opened residences at one campus has attracted some undesirable attention. This has resulted in enhanced monitoring of the site and further plans to improve security. These measures show that safety and security for student accommodation is a priority for the college.

Overall, there are adequate recruitment, selection and vetting processes in place to make sure students are provided with appropriate adults to work with them. However, there are some shortfalls in a number of cases that bring into question the consistency of the college's recruitment practices. For example, references are not verified, existing employees who are employed into other roles are not subject to the college's full recruitment and selection process. Employees who have standard Criminal Record Bureau checks who are recruited into jobs that require enhanced checks are placed in these positions before the outcome of new checks are known. These circumstances do add a small element of risk in determining the suitability of staff to newly appointed positions within the college.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Students benefit from excellent levels of personal support because college staff ensure that they are available when required or called upon. New students are provided with a very good induction which gives them an excellent start in terms of knowing what support is available to them. Students are very clear which members of staff they can go to for personal support and freely initiate interaction and seek help from a variety of different people across the campuses. Wardens and the welfare team play a central role in supporting students as well as staff in the accommodation team. In addition, students benefit from a well coordinated tutorial system which helps to bridge academic and welfare matters. This means that there is effective, regular communication which allows information to be shared appropriately between staff with different roles. Student support is given a high priority because of this holistic and focused approach to academic and welfare needs

The college provides an environment where equality of opportunity is important and diversity is understood and promoted. The college's core values are well known and practiced on a

day-to-day basis. International students are helped to integrate into academic and social life. Those students with additional needs are provided with individualised support that is always based on their assessed needs. Staff describe 'going that extra mile' to ensure students can reach their full potential and are not disadvantaged in any way. Students live and learn in an environment where social inclusion for everyone is prioritised and discrimination in any form is not tolerated.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The college actively seeks the views and opinions of students. The college promotes the 'learners voice' in everything it does and this approach is embedded into campus life. Students benefit from the college having a variety of ways in which they can express their views and influence the way in which the campuses operate. These include: focus groups and surveys, consultation with class representatives and members of the student association and student governors. There is also an independent under eighteen residential review forum as well as routine residency meetings and tutorials. The college also has a student sabbatical officer whose role it is to actively promote students ideas and requests. Students feel appropriately consulted and involved in the life of the college.

Students benefit from excellent guidance and support from a range of staff both on arrival and in preparation for leaving the college. The majority of students have mobile phones and there are no concerns amongst students about being able to contact their parents, friends and families.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Students are provided with good quality accommodation that is comfortable, clean, adequately furnished and well maintained. Some students are living in newly built residencies which are of a very high standard and demonstrates the college's commitment to providing quality accommodation where it can. Each student has an individual bedroom with many having en-suite facilities. Students have access to communal areas in each residency which includes basic kitchens and common rooms. Students expressed great satisfaction with the accommodation provided. Students who are under eighteen are accommodated across a number of mixed residential houses. Staff are aware that these arrangements can present additional risks to younger students so monitor their welfare closely.

A small number of students are in lodgings with host families. This accommodation is arranged directly by the college and provides an alternative to staying in residences. Accommodation officers ensure that host families are suitable and can provide the necessary room and facilities that students require. The accommodation is monitored during its use and student feedback is gained on a regular basis to ensure that what is provided meets their individual needs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Students benefit from living in a college that is effectively managed and well run. A comprehensive range of information is readily available about the college, its values, services and operation. Senior managers have a very good insight into how well students are being supported. Welfare and support teams are led by a conscientious and effective residential

services manager who is accountable to a senior director of the college. Staff deliver professional and supportive services because they work in partnership with each other and as a team. They are also provided with clear guidance about their roles from competent and supportive managers.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Students support and learning experiences are underpinned by the college's strong values of putting learners first and promoting an open and respectful culture. This supports and reinforces an environment where student differences are acknowledged, they are treated fairly and with equal concern. Staff are very professional in their outlook with many citing the college's values as the basis for stability, achievement and success.

There is an established wardening group led by an experienced senior warden who provides clear leadership to the residential team. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that welfare and nursing services are coordinated in a way that is effective and benefits students.

There are good policies and practice guidance, kept under review, known by staff, helping to ensure students are looked after well during their time at the college. In addition, student welfare is promoted by appropriate monitoring systems. Managers have a clear overview of the residential operation which helps to ensure that students are supported in a consistent and safe manner.

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 the college's system for recruiting all staff who will work with students under 18 includes all necessary vetting checks before appointment which can be verified from recruitment records. (NMS 34)