

Doncaster College for the Deaf

Inspection report for further education college

Unique reference number	SC008016
Inspection date	25 February 2009
Inspector	Helen Walker
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	22 September 2005

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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

Doncaster College for the Deaf provides education and training, to deaf and hearing-impaired students in the age range from 16 years old up to 64 years old. The college offers a range of academic and vocational courses.

College residential accommodation is available to 137 students. Students under the age of 18 occupy on-campus halls of residence, known as Darley Lodge for females and Greenaway Lodge for males. Both lodges are to the rear of the main college building and provide students with individual or shared bedrooms. Each lodge has a kitchen and dining area, a lounge and laundry facilities.

The college works within a total communication environment with students free to choose their preferred method of communication. On-site facilities include the sports hall and leisure bar, swimming pool and a well-equipped cafeteria.

The college is situated directly opposite Doncaster racecourse and is located two miles from Doncaster town centre, with good access to public transport, leisure and shopping facilities.

At the time of the inspection, a total of 37 students were resident in Darley and Greenaway lodges. Throughout this visit, an independent British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter was available and facilitated discussion between the students and inspectors.

Summary

This was an announced inspection, to look at how the college promotes and safeguards the welfare of students under 18 years old, for whom the college provides accommodation. All the key national minimum standards (NMS) for Further Education colleges were inspected. The recommendations made at the previous inspection were followed up and details of these are outlined in improvement section of this report.

The college provides excellent holistic support to students, with good procedures to protect their welfare. A strong and well-informed management team promotes the students well-being. Additionally, the college provides an experienced, competent and consistent staff team.

Students receive services that positively promotes their good health and well-being. This includes access to an array of health professionals and direct contact with an independent counsellor. The catering arrangements provides students with a very good quality service to meet their dietary needs.

There are no issues with bullying in the college and effective methods of communication, enables students to raise any concerns they may have. There are excellent levels of student involvement and an emphasis on inclusion throughout the college.

Good practice recommendations have been made, to ensure the students' welfare is fully promoted. These relate to introducing a less restrictive practice for students, in respect of locking lodge exit doors with a key. To ensure staff record all details of fire evacuations in the lodges, so that this demonstrates that students have participated in the procedures.

Recommendations also ask for student sanctions to be monitored for effectiveness and that staff receive the appropriate training, in respect of the use of physical intervention. The college should continue to develop user-friendly formats of college policies, as part of their statement of purpose, for the benefit of all students.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, a recommendation was made to improve the bathroom/shower and toilet facilities in Darley and Greenaway lodges. The bathroom/shower and toilet facilities have yet to be fully refurbished, to provide students with pleasant, modern amenities. However, the college is in the process of securing funding and planning permission for major re-development work on campus. This includes new accommodation blocks with bathroom/shower and toilet facilities, to meet the needs of the students.

The college was asked to produce policies in DVD format, so that students have benefit from visual information. This work has started and a DVD made in respect of anti-bullying. Other DVDs for policies, such as child protection and complaints, are still to be produced. The college was also asked to ensure sufficient staff are on duty, to support students with additional needs to enable them to access the same range of opportunities enjoyed by other students. This has now been achieved.

The provision of training for staff, in the use of physical intervention by a British Institute for Learning Disabilities (BILD) accredited provider, is now available. However, not all staff have received this training, in order to support them in their work and care of the students.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Students benefit from services that positively promotes their good health and well-being. Thorough health assessments and available information, enables students health care needs to be appropriately met.

The college actively provides a range of health care services, to ensure students have prompt access to health professionals. For example, the college employs two nurses, an audiologist, a speech and language therapist and there is direct access to an independent counsellor. This allows for students who have more specific health needs to be met. Additionally, a local doctor visits the college weekly, giving students the opportunity to see them on campus.

Students said that they use the drop-in facility at the college medical centre, for contact with the nurse and if they are unwell, the staff in the lodges look after them. They also said that they have the choice to see a male or female doctor and prefer for staff to accompany them to facilitate communication. Students have excellent access to mental health services with staff who are signers for the deaf.

Health promotion and discussion groups cover a wide range of topics, such as smoking cessation, sexual health, drugs and alcohol misuse. Students are keen to acknowledge the very good advice and assistance they receive from staff, which helps them to make informed choices and decisions about healthy lifestyles.

There is very good quality catering provision in the college. This offers healthy options with a range of freshly cooked meals. Catering staff are very knowledgeable about the promotion of healthy eating and the food on offer reflects this. The college caters for the students cultural, religious and special dietary needs. A food focus group allows students to have their say about the catering in the college and from this, students have been listened to and effected change to menus.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Students said bullying is not a problem at the college. The college has suitable policies in place, to deal with any issues of bullying and have produced a DVD about this. The DVD provides students and staff with good visual information, through signing, about how to deal with any matters of bullying.

Staff receive training in respect of safeguarding and they promote the welfare of students. There are sound policies and procedures in place, to ensure any issue of alleged or suspected harm to students is dealt with appropriately. Effective methods of communication, enables students to raise concerns with different people. This includes access to the email, intranet, text and contact with nominated support workers and personal tutors.

Students are made aware of the disciplinary measures used at the college. Staff discussion and prospectus information sets out expectations of behaviour at the college. Sanctions are appropriate, however, some students considered them not to be fair across the lodges.

During the evening and night, the exit doors to the lodges are locked with a key for security and to keep students safe in the lodges. The key is kept in staff possession. Although another key is available, in a 'break glass' case on the internal wall next to the door, this unnecessarily restricts the students access to freely leave the building.

Students are clear about how to use the complaints process and consider issues are dealt with properly. The college provides forums and opportunities for students to raise issues. This includes the learner involvement strategy, equality and diversity group and food focus group.

Health and safety procedures are good and they help to ensure the physical environment of the accommodation and college is free from safety hazards. Appropriate checks are carried out, in respect of fire safety and students demonstrate good knowledge about the residential and college evacuation procedures. However, fire evacuation records are not maintained in both lodges. The group leader corrected this and there is now a book in place to record this information. The privacy of students is maintained without intrusion from staff.

There are robust recruitment and employment procedures in place, to ensure staff are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent systems in place, to ensure students receive a high level of personal support. The holistic staff approach means students have individual support, to take account of their different needs reflecting race, culture, religion and ability.

Students receive significant support, in relation to their deafness or hearing impairment and staff are trained in the use of BSL. Students said they consider BSL to be their first language and feel the college is an environment where they can communicate easily and quickly with staff and other students.

An extremely effective pastoral system gives students regular access to personal tutors, nominated support workers and health professionals. Additionally, the college runs a Support Information and Guidance Network (SIGN) centre, which gives students advice and assistance on various matters and it is open throughout the day and into the evenings. The availability of an independent counsellor on-site, provides students with an excellent source of support for more personal and confidential matters.

There are excellent levels of student involvement and an emphasis on inclusion, which is a thread that runs throughout the college. The college has developed an effective learner involvement strategy. This encourages students to have representation on major committees, for example, the equality and diversity group and food focus group.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available on campus and in the local community. Students make use of the college facilities, which includes the leisure bar, sporting amenities and library.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Students have significant opportunities to contribute to and to express their views about the accommodation and welfare provision. This empowers students and enables changes to take place. There are formal consultation systems, such as the college council, student representative groups and twice-yearly learner surveys. The less formal meetings allows students to meet with tutors and nominated workers. Support staff have a good understanding of their students needs and they are fully committed to promoting their well-being.

Students feel listened to by the college and their actions show that their views are taken account of and acted on. Students are responsible for changes in menus, opening times of the cafeteria and more flexible weekend/evening return times.

There are many communication systems available to allow, promote and assist students, to have contact with their parents and families. Students favour the use of minicomms, telephone text, internet and letters. The college maintains regular contact with parents and welcomes their visits.

There is very good information and guidance available to students, both on arrival at the college and in preparing to leave. The college website gives students a good overview of the welfare and education aspects of college life. Students said they chose the college because of the use of BSL. They said 'this has been fantastic as we learn quicker and feel part of the community here'. Excellent support systems within the main campus, helps to prepare students who are leaving the college.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The college's residential provision is organised, to provide students under the age of 18 years old with accommodation on site. However, a small number of older students, of a similar age share this accommodation. This takes account of maturity and the independence preparation needed, to move to a residence for people who are over 18 years old. The accommodation is in two lodges, which are separate for female and male students. Clear rules about males visiting females are in place.

The lodges are kept clean, tidy and warm. Recently refurbished kitchens in both lodges are bright, well-equipped and homely. Bedrooms are timeworn and students said they would like them to be updated.

Adequate toilet and washing facilities in both lodges, provides students with appropriate privacy. Showers are available with adaptations for those students with additional needs. Students said they are unhappy with the state of the bathrooms and toilet blocks. This is due to the poor condition of the bathroom fittings and general decorative order. Plans for the college, show major development of the campus and residential accommodation, which will improve the residential facilities.

The college do not place students who are under the age of 18 years old in lodgings. All accommodation is provided in the two lodges on the campus. Health and safety procedures ensures thorough risk assessments are carried out for any off-site short-stay accommodation arranged by the college. This ensures the accommodation is suitable to meet and safeguard students' welfare.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A range of information about the college and accommodation arrangements is available to students, parents and staff. Various policies promotes the welfare of students and they are accessible on the college intranet. These are mostly text based, which is not a suitable format for all students. Work continues on user-friendly formats for these policies. A recently completed DVD about anti-bullying has been produced by students and staff, which shows descriptive scenarios using BSL.

Welfare records are kept in good order and they are regularly monitored by senior college staff. However, sanctions are not always monitored for effectiveness, to ensure the action taken by staff is suitable and that it assists to promote appropriate student behaviours.

A strong and well-informed management team promotes the students well-being. A consistent, competent and experienced staff team, provides holistic support and guidance to students. Adequate numbers of staff supervises students outside of teaching time. Staffing includes males and females and former pupils of the college. This offers students good social role models. College policies are regularly reviewed, known and accessible to staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The opportunities available gives students the chance to achieve their full potential. There is a strong determination to develop equality and diversity strategies, as this is seen as integral, to meet the needs of students. The college excels in this aspect, through the encouragement of participation and the ethos on campus.

Induction and other ongoing training opportunities are available to staff, to equip them with knowledge and skills in their work with the students. The students particularly welcome staff efficiency in the use of BSL. Not all staff have an understanding of the practical application of physical intervention with students. Although staff are adept at dealing with incidents in a non-confrontational way, there are times when physical intervention is necessary.

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 no unreasonable measures are in place, in particular the restrictive practice in relation to lodge exit doors locked with a key (NMS 4.5)
- maintain records to demonstrate that fire drills have been regularly carried out in 'residential time' (NMS 24.2)
- monitor the records of student sanctions to establish the effectiveness of these and take any reasonable action as a result (NMS 21.1)
- ensure staff receive appropriate training in welfare practices, in particular the use of physical intervention (NMS 30.10)
- ensure the statement of the college's welfare, in particular the child protection and complaints policies are available in a user-friendly format suitable for all students (NMS 1).