

# Hadlow College

Inspection report for further education college

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<b>Inspector</b>	Roland Minto / Bill Wallace
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	

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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**

Located on the edge of Hadlow village in Kent, Hadlow College is a specialist Land Based College that provides a range of Further, Higher and Adult Education Courses in subjects such as animal management, equine management, horticulture, agriculture and countryside, floristry and fisheries.

Residential accommodation is available for up to 160 further education students, aimed at those whose courses require early morning duties or who live too far away to make attendance practical. At the time of inspection there were 90 residential students below the age of 18.

The college has four other sites across Kent, but only the main site offers residential accommodation.

The college has developed an extensive range of partnerships with other local educational providers as well as in the business community.

### **Summary**

This was an announced inspection carried out over two days by two inspectors. Pre-inspection material was returned by the college, and all of the key individuals on the permanent college staff were interviewed, as were a number of individuals employed on a sessional basis. There were 28 student questionnaires returned and the inspectors met with a delegation of 15 students as a group. Questionnaires were also seen from five visiting professionals.

The inspection looked at all the Key National Minimum Standards for Accommodation of Students under 18 by Further Education Colleges, and also collected evidence on some other standards where this arose in the course of the inspection.

Hadlow College offers an excellent service to its residential students, and provides support in a way which promotes safety whilst encouraging responsibility and independence. Students expressed considerable enthusiasm for the choice they had made, and raised no serious criticisms.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

This is the first inspection for this service.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Resident students at Hadlow College benefit from excellent support in managing their own health in an age-appropriate manner. All are registered with a local GP practice, and are supervised by staff trained in first aid. Unwell students are able to summon support, and express confidence that doctor's appointments will be arranged and that they will be checked upon regularly. Parents are communicated with appropriately. Individual students are responsible for managing their own medication.

Students are well supported in managing a range of health and personal problems both through the work of the on-site Student Support Services Team, and the additional specialist input from a freelance counsellor, sexual health nurse, and a sports therapist and trainer. Students for whom there are specific welfare concerns are identified at an early stage, and an individualised care plan devised to meet their needs.

Issues of drinking and smoking are dealt with in an educational rather than moralistic framework, although the college operates a zero tolerance policy towards illegal drugs. Inappropriate use of the college bar by under 18s is carefully controlled. Given the wide age range of students in the college overall, the college takes a pragmatic view of students smoking by restricting it to specific external areas, whilst ensuring the health consequences of smoking are fully explored within the curriculum.

Catering provision is regarded as central to the healthy lifestyle of the College. Considerable steps have been taken to integrate what is available in the College Restaurant with the information that is available through the tutorial system. Healthy diets are encouraged, for example by the provision of 'healthy only' options for breakfast twice a week, and there is a concentration in the restaurant on using locally sourced produce, in line with the overall objectives of the college. Individual support in moving towards more healthy diets is available from the Sports Therapist and Trainer, and the swipe card system enables concerns about the eating habits of individual students to be monitored if a concern is identified. The college restaurant has opening times and arrangements designed specifically to meet the needs of students undertaking early morning or late afternoon duties as part of their course.

The site shop concentrates on stocking healthier varieties of food for students who are cooking for themselves. Students generally regard the emphasis on healthy eating as positive. Suitable facilities are available in the residential blocks for students to cook for themselves. Vending machines offer healthy options to students.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Students resident at Hadlow College are well protected from harm or abuse, through both robust and clear policies and the personal commitment of the staff to the well-being of the young people.

There is a clear policy on countering bullying or harassment. Students speak positively about the need to maintain stable relationships with each other, and confirm that bullying is not a significant issue in the college. They express confidence that minor episodes are dealt with promptly and effectively.

The college has clear policies and procedures on the reporting of allegations or suspicions of abuse, and there is a clear structure for reporting such incidents to the Board, although in practice there have been no such incidents in the last 12 months. There are two dedicated Child Protection Coordinators within Student Support Services. Child protection training is delivered at a number of levels depending on staff roles, but all receive induction and updates, including the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governors. The staff handbook includes a 'whistleblowing' procedure (called 'Confidential Reporting').

The college's disciplinary policy is clearly laid out in the Student Handbook, with two procedures, one for the general college, and a second relating to the resident students. Students live and work in an environment where discipline is maintained in a sensitive manner, and resident students recognise that rules are there predominantly to maintain their safety. Students are clear about expectations, and understand the escalating responses if inappropriate behaviour continues. They describe the wardens as fair in their occasional implementation of disciplinary measures. Students appreciate the fact that, whilst approachable, wardens maintain appropriate boundaries. In extreme cases Governors are clear about their role in the appeals process, and the Equality and Diversity lead also attends disciplinary hearings where relevant to ensure no student is unfairly disadvantaged. There is a clear policy on the use of physical restraint, emphasising that this is not to be used as a punitive measure. Observed behaviour, and the comments of visiting professionals, confirm that behavioural standards are generally high.

There is a good system in place for recording and addressing complaints, though most of the issues recorded do not relate specifically to residential aspects of the college. Resident students are satisfied that their concerns and opinions are respected, and there are few grounds for complaints as such.

Students are adequately protected from the risk of fire through regular maintenance and checking of equipment, termly drills, and systematic reviews of risk assessments. The electronic key fob system provides some additional monitoring of who is in the accommodation blocks in the event of a fire.

Thorough staff recruitment procedures protect students from contact with unsuitable adults, and other adults living onsite (for example staff family members) are subject to appropriate checks. Personal security for residents is maintained through a key fob entry system to their accommodation, which prevents unauthorised access. Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) is being rolled out across the campus at the request of the student body, and after many years of negotiation the college has managed to reach agreement that a public footpath across the site will be relocated outside the boundary. Students confirmed that any unauthorised presence on the campus is swiftly dealt with by the wardens. Evening and night time supervision of the residential areas is maintained in ways which students feel offers suitable security whilst allowing them age appropriate privacy. The site is resourced (for example with personal laundry facilities and the site shop) in a way that means students do not have to place themselves at risk by going off site.

The college has a proactive attitude towards its health and safety responsibilities, and has a comprehensive range of risk assessments and health and safety procedures, covering both the specific risks arising from the specialist nature of the academic curriculum, as well as generic assessments suitable to all premises, and the leisure time activities of young people. There is a clear line of accountability from the Health and Safety Officer to the Estates Manager, but all Student Support Services take seriously their role in risk assessing any recreational activities, both on site and off.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Students benefit from a wide range of supports, with a well-structured and well-resourced Student Support Services Team complementing the tutorial support available to all students. Student Support Services staff all have caseloads of students identified as needing additional

support; usually these come via self-referral, though with capacity also to target young people seen as in danger of not fulfilling their educational potential. Individualised care plans are prepared in these instances, and shared with other staff on a 'need to know' basis in line with the college's policy on confidentiality. All needs related to the curriculum provision are provided through the Additional Learning Support Department. Students are very comfortable in approaching student services staff over any difficulties.

Student support staff also take a lead in developing the 'Enrichment programme', which includes both formal sporting activities and recreational activities. These are constantly under review, with new opportunities, for example fencing, being piloted to test out students' interest. The Common Room has recently been refurbished, and additional funds have been provided to develop the ability of students to be involved in music making in the evenings. An active Student Association provides another channel for social activities, as well as offering another opportunity for students to accept responsibility.

The college acknowledges that the requirements of some courses, such as equine studies, make specific demands on particular students, but ensures that these students are not overburdened and are able to retain a reasonable balance of free time. Weekends are generally regarded as a quiet time around the college, with students who remain on site describing this as a good opportunity to get work done.

The college promotes an inclusive environment, attracting a wide range of abilities; currently 50% of students aged 16-18 have a disability or learning difficulty. Equality and diversity issues are incorporated into the students' tutorial programme. The Equality and Diversity lead is part of the Students Support Services Team, and coordinates relevant training for all staff. All staff are required to have three-yearly updates on equality and diversity training, and the Equality and Diversity lead reports on a regular basis to the Board. Addressing equality and diversity issues is acknowledged by the Governors as not only a legal necessity but as central to the longer-term development of the college in attracting both students and business links.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Students benefit from having numerous avenues to contribute to the operation of the college, and there were several practical examples of where their input had made a difference, for example in suggestions about relocating the smoking shelters. At the highest level there are two student representatives on the Board (though not necessarily residential students), for which role they are given training. Student Association Reps also attend the Health and Safety Committee; the Education and Diversity Committee; the Sustainability Group; and the Marketing and Materials Meeting. Additionally there are numerous other specific forums, such as for particular curriculum areas, plus regular consultation exercises (for example December 08/January 09 Accommodation Survey) through which opinions can be voiced. There is also a general residents meeting chaired by the Senior Warden. Feedback on comments is provided through 'You said - We did' cards around the campus. This area is one of the particular strengths of the college.

Most residential students go home at weekends, unless they are on the rota for equine duties, and are therefore in regular private contact with their families. However students confirm that they have ready access to additional private telephone contact and are supported to use this whenever they wish.

Students have positive recollections of their induction into college life, describing lots of bonding and ice-breaking games to make sure they were all fully involved. Good written information is available in the Student Handbook. Staff are described as having been proactive, seeking out individual students rather than waiting for students to go to them with difficulties. As one student observed, 'I thought I'd never settle, but now I think of the college as my second home'.

Support is available throughout a student's stay in planning for their next stage of their lives. Input is available from the Connexions service; for individuals this may be in the area of identifying later employment or training options, or in discussing possible back up plans. On a group basis this may take the form of holding CV surgeries.

Students speak in very positive terms about the relationships they have with both academic and Student Support Services staff, and they feel that minor misdemeanours are resolved and not held against them. Students comment that the residential experience at the college is a good preparation for them to live independently in the future.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

The residential accommodation blocks are grouped tightly together in one area of the campus, and allocated to maintain appropriate segregation by age and gender. Careful consideration is given to requests to be located with friends, with personal wishes being balanced against the need to ensure combinations are safe and appropriate. The accommodation blocks, which were originally built in the 1960s are currently going through a programme of refurbishment, focusing largely on redecoration but with some restructuring of kitchen areas to increase available space. This will significantly improve their appearance. Nevertheless the blocks which have yet to undergo this process (approximately one third of the total) are still of a good standard. Students confirm that they were consulted about the redecoration process. Five of the blocks have facilities for students with disabilities, and all meet the standards on the provision of bathroom and toilet facilities.

The college has recently arranged for a 'Cash Back' system through the Finance Department, meaning that students do not have to walk into the village to withdraw money, thus reducing the possibility of placing themselves at risk, or the need to maintain unnecessarily large sums of money on site.

All of the blocks are protected by key fob entry systems, and have internal telephone link to contact a warden. Students have access to free laundry facilities in the Student Facilities Block.

No students under the age of 18 are placed in accommodation away from the main campus.

Thorough risk assessments are conducted for any activities requiring students to be away from the campus overnight. For example, a recent trip involved sports teams attending a tournament at another college. Full information was seen about the nature and suitability of the accommodation being provided.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.



The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Students are seen in the context of individual need, and support systems are designed to maximise the potential of all. Equality and diversity issues are built into the group tutorial system and enrichment programme, and the prominent role of the lead officer ensures that the issues are fully integrated into strategic planning. Inclusiveness is seen to incorporate not only visible issues such as race or gender, but also attracting the widest possible range of ability levels.

The college has a clear and up to date statement of the principles on which residential accommodation is offered to young people. This is contained in the Student Handbook, but is also available through the college's further education prospectus, as well as via the college web-site. The handbook makes clear both what is provided by the college, and what is expected from students in return. The Residential Handbook also contains similar information, and includes a page for parents to sign, confirming that they have received and read the information.

Students benefit from clear strategic management within the college, led by the Principal, but supported both by the senior staff and the Board. The residential provision, whilst experienced by a relatively small proportion of students overall, is seen as an important area, and benefits from the improvement agenda in place across the whole site. Systems are in place to ensure continuous quality assurance and improvement.

Students' safety and well-being are enhanced by a comprehensive system of risk assessments covering all aspects of activity within the college. Accidents and near misses are suitably recorded and investigated, with termly monitoring, and appropriate onward reporting where necessary.

Levels of supervision to resident students are appropriate to the age and maturity of the students, whose perception is generally that they are kept safe by staff who are readily available to them without compromising their need for age-appropriate independence. Students express considerable confidence in the capacity of Resident Wardens and the Student Support Services Team to respond to difficulties at any hour of the day.

Resident students are looked after by staff with suitable experience, and clear responsibilities laid down in job descriptions. However it is clear that staff routinely work well above the obligations of their job descriptions, because of their personal commitment. Staff have annual appraisals and training development plans.

Students receive care and supervision from staff following clear residential and welfare policies contained in the Welfare Handbook. This provides a comprehensive range of guidance, covering issues such as young people's finance, issues of bereavement, self-harm, depression, as well as the more formal policies on matters such as complaints, equality and diversity, and child protection.

## **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):