

Moulton 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

This college is an independent Further Education Corporation regarded as a land-based establishment providing a wide range of education and training for adults and young people. Its operations are carried on from a number of sites, but its principal campus is in a rural village setting reasonably close to a town, main railway link and motorways.

The college admits some students, including those aged under 18, on a residential basis depending on their circumstances and to facilitate its open access policy. Some 18 units of accommodation are provided including six dedicated to students under 18 and one accommodating male and female students aged 18 to 24 who have learning difficulties. Male and female students under 18 are accommodated separately. Their accommodation provides single bedrooms with en suite and shared bedrooms with no more than two sharing. Where en suite is not provided communal bathroom and toilets are made available in sufficient numbers. Each unit of accommodation for this group of students has a sitting area and kitchenette and these students are catered for on a half-board basis. They are provided breakfast and dinner but, like all other students, purchase lunch from one of the many college cafeterias. Students have access to laundry facilities in or adjacent to their accommodation.

Health care, social, sports and recreational facilities are provided on the campus together with a range of welfare support services. At the time of inspection there were 95 resident students under 18 and a significant number of them contributed via the pre-inspection survey and formal and informal contact during the inspection visit.

Summary

This key announced inspection assessed the college's performance against all the key national minimum standards (NMS) relevant to the national Every Child Matters outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic wellbeing and organisation. The college continues to provide its resident students, who are aged under 18, exceptionally high standards of accommodation and welfare support. Moreover, it has abundant capacity to maintain this. Two recommendations are made to address upgrading of training for some ancillary staff and provision of landline telephone for students' use.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The college makes excellent provisions to respond effectively to resident students' health care needs. At the core of the health care system is the welfare centre in which qualified nurses with current accredited status are employed alongside the student counsellor and the chaplain who also acts as student listener. Effectively co-ordinated by the welfare manager who provides effective leadership, the system successfully addresses students' physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Comprehensive in reach, the resident health care system is organised on a flexible basis so that it is accessible to students and, in general, focuses on health issues pertinent to them. For example, most students are in robust health and therefore services are targeted on keeping them well. There is thus a strong focus on preventative measures such as the effective work being done in helping students to an awareness of the adverse health effects of smoking, alcohol abuse and illegal drugs and substance misuse.

Highly developed information systems are in place to amass details about the health of all resident students before or on entering the college. Staff take particular care in this regard in respect of students with pre-existing health problems and those with special needs arising from their disabilities and any associated health problem. Although it is not a specialist facility for students with disabilities, the college succeeds in its equality and diversity objectives to be as inclusive as possible ensuring that health and disability do not avoidably preclude appropriate students from the education and training that it provides. Accordingly, necessary aids and adaptations are made for students with special needs and there are detailed health plans that successfully drive the care of those with known health problems. For instance, there are clear protocols setting out how staff must respond in particular circumstances where students have conditions such as epilepsy or are asthmatic. Further, there are sound policy and procedures which ensure safety and efficiency in the storage and administration of medication.

A remarkable feature of the students' health arrangement is the support and encouragement staff give them to build their capacity to take responsibility for maintaining their own good health. The students recognise this and are aware of the health services both within college and local primary health services such as those provided by doctors in the GP practices in which they are registered. Resident students consider that they are well looked after and, together with staff, cite the thorough cleaning, strict hygiene and infection control measures among the practical measures taken to promote their health.

With regard to diet and nutrition, resident students consider that they are provided regular meals in sufficient quantities, choice and variety. A minority of students are not entirely satisfied in regard to the range of choices and variety of food. However, they and the catering staff recognise that this is due to it being early in the new term and these issues will be resolved once there is better understanding of the range of foods this new group of students prefers. As is the case with all other aspects of residence, catering staff administer periodic customer satisfaction surveys, listen to students and use the outcome to adjust the service. All students are at least satisfied for most of the time. This takes full account of the college's successful promotion of healthy eating and discreet monitoring by staff to ensure students do not too frequently miss meals and to identify those who may have eating disorders.

Reflecting their confidence in the exceptional quality of the health arrangements, some students say residential life at the college is akin to their second home. They consider that they have a wide range of people to whom to turn with both health related problems and other worries that threaten their emotional equilibrium. This accords with views expressed by staff at all levels who support the established ethos in the college that the safeguard and promotion of residential students' welfare are the responsibility of all who are employed there.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

In matters concerning their safety and security in the college, resident students express content with the measures taken to achieve the feeling of safety they enjoy. This group of students report that they experience no bullying or harassment in college. They are aware of, and they support, the respect agenda strategy which is established in college life as a means of countering bullying. The respect agenda fosters among all the college community respect for others and consideration of their feelings, safety and comfort. It accomplishes this in great measure. This is amply reflected in the college fulfilling its equality and diversity ambitions to create circumstances in which students who are widely diverse in their sex, race, religion, disabilities and other personal characteristics being comfortably socially integrated. For example, in this exceptionally harmonious and caring college environment, resident students pursuing different courses live well together and this includes students with learning difficulties who are also socially integrated into college life. Furthermore, students cite the richness of differences among them and the quality of relationships that they enjoy, as being among their most valued experiences.

Policies, procedures, practices and the overall awareness that staff must have to protect resident students from abuse, are successfully embedded in the routine operation of the college. Safeguarding of the welfare of resident students is given a high priority in staff training and robust management and leadership arrangements. For example, the co-ordination of child protection within the college is vested in a senior member of staff and is scrutinised by the management board. These arrangements yield clear objectives such as effective liaison with the local authority child protection services, relevant staff training and demonstration of productive co-operative work with other agencies to protect younger resident students from abuse. Above all, those students express feelings of safety and a sense of well-being in college, and there are no current or outstanding safeguarding matters arising from any incidents therein. However, whilst ancillary staff are given briefings about the college's child protection procedure, understand it, and are aware of their responsibility, there is less certainty about how their briefings or training equip them to be able to identify abuse and to respond in the event of being the recipient of any allegations. The excellent relationships that staff such as housekeepers have with students makes it likely that younger students may share worries with them. It is thus necessary where such worries are shared, all staff are able to identify whether there are any child protection implications and, if so, respond appropriately.

Younger resident students benefit from the college's sound approach to discipline. The discipline policy appropriately takes account of their age and the type of environment in which they are living. Accordingly, the students are not only encouraged to apply themselves to their studies, but to exercise control of their own conduct. Rules are few, but clear in terms of promoting safety, comfort and the culture of respect and harmony which has been established. The outcome of this is that students behave well and discipline problems are few. Where it is necessary for disciplinary measures to be taken, they are approached in ways that are helpful to the students and always within the permitted policy of which they are aware. Students who commented say that the college's approach to discipline is reasonable albeit most have given no cause for it to be invoked. A minority of students who have been subjected to the college's disciplining, considered the whole process fair and helpful in causing them to improve their conduct.

The college has in place an established quality assurance system including a complaints procedure. This provides one of the means by which students, or parents on their behalf, may express dissatisfaction or concerns about the service. The procedure conforms to current good practice and the required standard. Given that staff routinely seek feedback from resident

students, any dissatisfaction or concerns they have are dealt with at an early stage. There are therefore few formal complaints, but any which are made are taken seriously, carefully and fairly considered and properly resolved.

Resident students are provided with care and accommodation that provide them with the level of privacy that befits their age and needs. For example, their living accommodation provides mostly single bedroom occupancy with en suite. Where two students share a double bedroom, this is by choice and with the option that if for any reason sharing becomes a problem alternative arrangements are made. Male and female students are housed separately and bathrooms and toilets are designed and equipped to assure students complete privacy when they use these facilities. Supervision of resident students is evident, but carried out discreetly. Students rate very highly the standard of the accommodation and supervision. They consider that their accommodation is exceptionally well-equipped and homely, and staff are always available to talk to and to help them resolve any problems they have.

A comprehensive and highly effective range of security, and health and safety measures that the college takes successfully protects resident students from harm. All staff and students through training and briefings are aware of the college's health and safety requirements and take personal responsibility to ensure that these are met. All the necessary fire detection, alarm and fire fighting equipment are installed and are tested for operational efficiency at the required intervals. Resident students are familiar with the fire procedure and refer to their participation in periodic fire drills. Robust management systems ensure that gas and electrical appliances are regularly tested and hot water temperature is regulated to a safe degree. The heightened security arrangements to deter unauthorised persons accessing the students' residence and to control access to and supervision of visitors to the wider college premises, are remarkable. Resident students say they value highly these initiatives, which provide the reassurance they need.

The college authorities take exceptional care to ensure that persons employed are suitable to have substantial contact with young people attending the college on a day or residential basis. Those involved in staff recruitment and selection have completed relevant training and operate within rigorous procedures with requisite checks and balances to identify candidates who are unsuitable. For instance, no-one commences duty in the college without a satisfactory criminal records disclosure. Employees are contractually required to declare any criminal convictions incurred following their appointment, work within a strict code of professional conduct and are subject to further criminal record checks every three years. Resident students who offered comments say they are comfortable with staff at all levels who are approachable and helpful.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Resident students who are under 18 are provided a comprehensive range of personal support services with which they are well satisfied and elicit comments such as: 'There is always people around if you need them, including live-in wardens on duty overnight.' Furthermore, 'I feel safe with all the security in Moulton and with the support from the welfare team.'

All resident students have staff on hand in their living accommodation who provide appropriate supervision and support. This is complemented by each student's personal tutor who provides academic guidance and bridges the gap between this and any personal or welfare supported needed. The college's excellent welfare services make available a wide range of people,

independent of academic and residential staff, to whom resident students turn for support. These include qualified nurses, counsellors, youth workers and a chaplain. Additionally, information about help lines and relevant outside agencies is promoted in the college.

The college operates within an exemplary equality and diversity strategy underpinned by a sound policy. Driven by committed and competent management, the strategy is demonstrably successful in achieving a diverse student population whose needs arising from their sex, race, disability and religion are met. The residential component is used creatively and effectively to facilitate this diversity. It enables students of differing abilities, including those with learning difficulties, from a wide area and cross-section of the community, to access the college's excellent education and training facilities. Moreover, it provides a welcoming, comfortable caring environment in which resident students, regardless of background and personal characteristics, are thriving.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Resident under 18 students are content that the college ensures that they and their parents are given sufficient information about all aspects of college life, including the residential arrangements. The new intake of students in this category place a high value on the standard of their accommodation and associated care and support services. Since many of the training courses that the students pursue are intended to equip them for employment in the commercial field, the college builds their capacity to understand what is needed to provide a good quality and commercially competitive service. The college's own residential provision is underpinned by the same principles and therefore it has an established quality assurance system aspects of which seek regular formal feedback from students. Resident students make good use of this formal means of commenting on the quality of the residential services in addition to informal consultation and sharing of views and opinions with their tutors and residential staff. Importantly, staff listen and the excellent range of equipment in the students' social centre and ways in which some services are delivered have been influenced by resident students' contributions.

Staff recognise the importance of resident students being able to maintain contact with their families and friends. The college thus makes flexible arrangements for students to be visited at the college and for contact to be facilitated by other means such as e-mail. However, no payphones are provided in the students' accommodation because generally students possess their own mobile telephones. The NMS specify provision, for students' use, one or more land-line telephones located such as to afford reasonable privacy when calls are made or received. The absence of such a facility is likely to cause students without their own telephone to seek staff's permission to use college telephones. This would not be acceptable if a student's intention is to alert someone outside the college of concerns therein. Senior staff recognise this as a lapse and have resolved to address it at the earliest opportunity.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Resident students who are aged under 18 benefit from the excellent accommodation that the college provides. All such accommodation is purpose-built and equipped to meet the needs of students who are resident on a term-time basis only. Students express a high degree of satisfaction with the standard of the accommodation believing it to provide the necessary

facilities and equipment for their comfort. For example, accommodation for those under 18 is separated from that for older students and provides mostly single en suite bedrooms. Where there is no en suite, communal bathrooms and toilets are provided in a ratio that in some instances exceeds the NMS. In promoting economic wellbeing, staff work creatively to enable students to capitalise on their residential experience and to develop their independent living skills. This is combined with curricular activities, such as work skills, time and money management, to enhance their personal development. Students relatively new to the college observe that they are already aware of the impact of this approach, as their families and friends have commented on their rapid maturity.

The college makes robust arrangements for events where students are accommodated away from college premises, on a short stay basis, during educational visits. Excellent written procedures and rigorous management scrutiny ensures that students on such visits are provided safe and satisfactory accommodation arrangements are safeguarded from avoidable harm and reasonably so from activities in which potential hazards have been identified.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The college as a whole and in particular its residential provision for students under 18, operates within an excellent rationale. This is captured in a range of documents, including the Student Handbook, which accurately sets out the facilities and services provided and the principles and methods that underpin the students accommodation, welfare support and education. A sample of students comment that the college is well managed in all its aspects and lives up to its prestigious reputation that informed their decision to join it. Importantly, its sound operational imperatives and competent management and leadership yield all round excellent outcomes for students as assessed against the Every Child Matters framework.

Management arrangements ensure that resident students are supported by well-qualified staff who are available in sufficient numbers to provide more than adequate supervision and to respond most effectively to their collective and individual needs. For example, students with learning difficulties are supported by a dedicated team of specialist staff and first class welfare provisions to meet their particular needs, including their social inclusion into college life. The induction programme that all new staff complete, in-service training arrangements that enable them to maintain and update their skills, and contribute to realising the college's strategy of continuous improvement pays dividends. Staff are, for instance, most adept at capitalising on the residential arrangements to promote students independent living skills, facilitate personal development and support education and training endeavour.

In promoting and safeguarding the welfare of resident students, senior staff demonstrate competent management and effective leadership. This is reflected in a range of robust management systems including strict monitoring of all aspects of the residential provisions and indicators such as complaints, accidents and disciplinary records. It is observed that across the college as whole, where in one instance the number of accidents was above the usual norm, this was immediately investigated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. In all aspects of the college's policies, procedure and practices equal opportunities, respect for and celebration of differences is inherent. Simply observing the composition of the college community, the resources provided

and comfortable inclusion of the diverse student population, it is evident that the equality and diversity principles that the college espouses are excellently manifested in its deeds.

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 all ancillary staff are given briefing or training to recognise abuse and respond to suspicion or allegations of it. (NMS 3.6)
- ensure that one or more land-line telephones, such as payphones, are readily accessible from each area of student accommodation, which afford a reasonable level of privacy in use, and which are maintained and repaired as necessary to keep them in working order (NMS 18.2).