

# Plumpton College

Inspection report for further education college

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC050962         |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 18 November 2009 |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Diane Thackrah   |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Key              |

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| <b>Head of care</b>            | Des Lambert                                                                       |
| <b>Head / Principal</b>        | Des Lambert                                                                       |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 16 November 2006                                                                  |

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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 is a Further Education college situated in the countryside on the South Downs in East Sussex. The college offers a diverse range of courses from wine making to sports science with a main focus on rural and environmental programmes such as farming, horticulture and equine studies. The college campus is centred near the main entrance and comprises of teaching rooms, library, sports hall, animal care centre, winery as well as student accommodation and dining facilities. The college also encompasses a working farm. The nature of the agricultural and equine studies mean that students enrolled on these courses often begin their day very early, therefore student accommodation is allocated on a priority basis to these students and students who have come from different parts of the country or from abroad.

The college can accommodate up to approximately 200 students. Around 100 were under 18 years of age at the time of the inspection. The main accommodation blocks are situated near the main entrance to the college, whilst the dining hall, student common room, snack bar, and bar, laundry and student support office are set close together. Nearby there are also tennis courts, a sports hall and library. The college has recently opened a new accommodation block.

Around 60 students were met with during this inspection and they contributed their views about the college.

### Summary

This is a satisfactory service. There are some shortfalls in the staff recruitment policies and procedures that do not fully promote the well-being of students, however, the college does have some systems in place for carrying out pre-recruitment checks. For this reason, the college is deemed to be satisfactory. This is a college with many strengths and some outstanding features. Students have their physical and emotional health needs well met. Health promotion is seen as important in the college and students are provided with a healthy and varied diet. The well-being of students is promoted in many ways such as through the college's bullying, child protection, and complaints policies and procedures. Students benefit from excellent support from a wide range of staff and have access to a very good range of social and leisure activities. Students enjoy positive relationships with the staff and are encouraged to contribute to the running of the college. Students are supported to settle in to college life and supported to move on. Students from overseas receive some additional support where needed. There is good communication between staff which helps them to provide consistent and safe support to students. Health and safety is taken seriously in the college in general. A recommendation has, however, been made regarding the need to formally risk assess any danger of falling from upper ground windows around the college.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

The registered provider was asked to review the colleges policies and procedures for administering medication to students, this has now been done and the college staff no longer hold medication on behalf of students. The registered provider was also asked to ensure that

risk assessments are carried out regarding risks to students and to cease using wedges in fire doors. Corrective action has been taken regarding these issues and this improves the safety arrangements that serve to promote the well-being of students. The registered provider was asked to make other improvements including keeping the building secure and keeping cleaning products secure. These issues have been addressed in order to safeguard students.

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

The provision is good.

The college is proactive in promoting the health of students and does this in a creative way in order to engage the students. A high number of staff members have been trained to give first aid and there are well stocked first aid kits around the college. Students feel confident that their health needs will be well addressed by staff and say that staff give them good advice about health issues. Students are registered with a local general practitioner and say that should they need to see other health care professionals college staff would assist them to do so. Students are required to manage their own medication and are able to keep this in their locked bedrooms. Some non-prescribed medication is given by the staff and a record is maintained of when it is administered. A written record is maintained of any accidents and significant incidents and this is monitored in order to detect any patterns with a view to promoting safety.

Students are supported in relation to any health and personal problems. Staff provide students with information about how to gain help from a wide range of local support groups and agencies. There is a college councillor and students also benefit from a Connexions officer being based on site. Students report that they receive a great deal of support and advice from college staff. There is a range of health information material available to students in the college.

Students receive good quality catering provision. Meals are adequate in quantity, quality and choice. There is always a vegetarian choice and special dietary needs can be catered for. Young people are able to have a say about what meals are on the menu and say that the chef is approachable regarding meal suggestions. There is an adequate dining space and well managed kitchens. Young people enjoy the food provided and appreciate the fact that much of the meat they eat is produced on the college farm.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The college's staff recruitment policies and procedures do not fully comply with the requirements of national minimum standards and students are not fully protected from unsupervised contact with adults who have not been subject to the college's complete procedures. Pre-recruitment checks occur for staff members, however, some are not recorded such as interview notes, references and reference verifications. Some staff have been employed without all checks being carried out. All staff members are criminal records bureau checked prior to them working in the college. These issues relate to administrative oversight and college staff have made assurances that all missing documentation will now be put in place.

Students are protected from bullying and harassment. There is a clear policy on bullying that both staff and students are made aware of. Students report that bullying is not a major issue in the college and say it would always be challenged by staff should it occur. There are policies and procedures in place which serve to safeguard young people living at the college and to protect them from abuse. There are two staff members trained to take a lead on child protection

issues and a third staff member is scheduled to undertake this training. All staff members have received training in child protection and have access to the college's child protection policies and procedures.

The use of discipline with students is fair and appropriate. Rules about discipline are made available to staff and young people. Staff keep parents informed about significant breaches of discipline and students say they are happy with the way they are treated by the staff. The arrangements for dealing with complaints are good. Complaints are taken seriously and well handled. Students are encouraged to raise any concerns they have so that they can be dealt with at an informal stage. Students think that their views and concerns are taken seriously by the staff. Clear information is made available to students to support them to make a complaint should they wish. Students report that their privacy is respected by staff. Staff knock and wait for a response before entering bedrooms and there are suitable measures for maintaining privacy in bathrooms and toilets.

There are good fire safety policies and procedures that promote the safety and well-being of students. These include the regular testing of fire equipment, regular fire drills and the promotion of fire safety to students. Staff have received guidance about how to respond in the event of fire. Student's safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities. All contact sports, activities, high risk areas and outings have risk assessments in place. Students are given reasonable protection from safety hazards. There is a health and safety policy in place which staff confirm is available to them. Safety checks occur within the building such as checks on portable electrical appliances and the electrical installation. There are window restrictors on ground floor windows to help prevent the risk of intruders, however, not all upper floor windows have a restrictor. Whist staff and students do not feel that the risk from falling from these windows is great, no formal, written assessment of this risk has been made in this area.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Students receive excellent staff support and say that there are many staff members in the college who they would approach for help and support. These people include the college wardens who are available around the clock, the school councillor and the Connexions worker. Students say that the staff are very approachable and extremely helpful. They give examples of staff giving them lifts into the local towns and collecting them from nights out. Staff ensure that students have a wide range of appropriate help lines outside of the college that they may contact for advice and support. There is very good communication between student welfare staff and other members of the college staff and this helps to promote and safeguard student welfare.

Students say that they do not experience inappropriate discrimination. The college has policies on anti-discrimination and equality and diversity which staff have access to. There is good support for students who do not speak English as a first language.

Excellent leisure facilities are available to students. These include the use of the on-site gym, sports hall, tennis courts and playing fields. Some students go horse riding in their spare time and say that this is particularly enjoyable because of the beauty of local environment. Staff organise a number of sporting events that students say they enjoy. Some students say they stay on campus at the weekends as there is so much to do. There is a range of common rooms, including a bar and games room. Students say this allows them lots of choice about where to

spent their time and what to do. Staff encourage students to spend their time constructively by arranging lots of on-site activities such as pool competitions and 'body-popping' lessons. Staff are also organising a Christmas ball for the students. Some students are involved in the 'young farmers club' which is facilitated by the college and offers students the opportunity of being involved in a number of enjoyable social and learning experiences.

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

The provision is good.

Students are able to contribute their views to the operation of residential provision in the college in a number of ways. This includes student surveys, residents meetings, food focus groups, a college governor scheme and student committee and informal feedback. Students say they feel listened to and that their views are taken seriously and acted upon when possible. Students give examples of food being improved on their request and being allowed to move bedrooms. The head teacher has a very positive attitude to listening to students and for encouraging them to have their say about things that affect them.

Students report that maintaining contact with their family members is not a problem. Most have a mobile phone, however, mobile reception is not very good at the college. There is a private telephone booth available for student's use. All students have internet access in numerous places throughout the college. The parents of students are contacted by staff regarding serious welfare concerns. Students receive guidance, both on arrival at the college and in preparing to leave the college. There is a formal induction process and new students to the college are shown around and introduced to staff. All new students are provided with a handbook which includes a wealth of information about college life including the rules, expected conduct and where to seek help and advice. There are systems in place for providing guidance to students who are leaving the college.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

There is good organisation of the boarding provision which aims to safeguard the welfare of students. Students who are under the age of 18 live in different sections of the houses dependant on their gender. Some bedrooms are for shared occupancy. Adults do not share with under 18's and bedrooms are not shared between members of the opposite sex. There is currently some discrepancy in the quality of accommodation and facilities. This is because new, good quality residential provision has recently been built. There is however, a rolling programme of refurbishment in the older residential provision. There is adequate provision of bathrooms and toilets. These areas offer appropriate levels of privacy and are kept clean and well maintained. Some bedrooms have en-suite facilities. The college does not arrange private lodgings for students and the welfare of students is safeguarded and promoted whilst away from the college.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

There is a clear statement of the principles of residential provision and student support that is made available to students, staff and parents. All new students are provided with a handbook that helps them understand their rights and responsibilities. Staff receive information about

the colleges policies and procedures and this allows the college to function in line with it's aims.

There are systems in place for reviewing risk assessments, complaints, sanctions and accidents and this contributes to student's welfare. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There are policies on anti-discriminatory practice and students report that their individual needs are well met.

There is good staff supervision of students. The college staff are available to students at all times and students report that they are confident about staff being available to them. Staff receive training in order to carry out their roles well. They say that as well as induction training, they have received training in areas such as first aid, fire safety, child protection and student financial advise. There is a good staff support system which includes staff having access to the college's policies and procedures in the form of a staff handbook, team meetings and an annual appraisal system.

The college is compliant with national minimum standards that relate to this outcome area. The judgement of satisfactory in this area is made in line with Ofsted benchmarking guidance which limits the judgement made for 'organisation' as being no higher than that made for the outcome area 'staying safe'. The organisation of staff recruitment is deemed to be no higher than satisfactory.

## 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 |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is a written risk assessment in place regarding windows presenting significant risk of falling for students. (NMS 42)
- ensure that all checks, as listed in national minimum standard 34 are carried out on all adults employed to work in the college, including those on a contract/sessional basis. Written records should be maintained of all checks. (NMS 34)