

Warwickshire College

Inspection report for further education college

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Setting address	Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa & Moreton Morrell, Warwick New Road, LEAMINGTON SPA, Warwickshire, CV32 5JE
Telephone number	01926 318 083
Email	mbailey@warkscol.ac.uk
Registered person	Warwickshire College
Head/ Principal	Mike Bailey
Nominated person	Mariane Cavalli
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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. Nearly 700 students are accommodated at the college's Moreton Morrell, Leamington Spa and Pershore sites. At the time of this inspection, about 150 students under the age of 18 were being accommodated on a flexi or full time basis.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced inspection, to look at how the college promotes and safeguards the welfare of students under 18 years of age. All the key national minimum standards for further education colleges were inspected. The recommendation made at the previous inspection was followed up and details of this are outlined in the improvement section of this report.

Warwickshire College is an outstanding service. Students' safety and protection is paramount and each student receives the necessary level of support that successfully meets their welfare needs. Staff are conscientious and committed to managing residential services in a way that best suits students and their circumstances. Students are able to make meaningful contributions to the operation of the college because their views and opinions are valued. Staff provide an environment where students are treated fairly and with equal concern.

Strong leadership and professional staff teams ensure the college provides the right support that is also focused on continuing improvement. Managers use well-established and developing quality assurance systems to monitor and evaluate the services being provided. The college is well informed about successes and strengths as well as areas in need of development or improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection, one good practice recommendation was made which has been actioned. Recruiting managers ensure all residential staff are properly vetted before they start work with students under the age of 18 to ensure their suitability.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of students' good health and well-being is outstanding. Staff actively put into effect the college's health education policies and integrate these into their daily contact with students. This is achieved by effective partnerships within the college and wider community health services. Students are well informed about available services because of the thorough and active role college staff take in arranging and facilitating access to services. This also means students have a choice regarding how they access services and information that best suits them. Students' health benefits from a service which encourages a greater awareness of how to prevent illness and poor health. This is because of the strong links with partner agencies such as youth outreach services, and mobile NHS provision and screening.

Staff in a range of different roles are part of an established network that actively supports student welfare and health. The key to this effective network is the flexibility and responsiveness of all staff with responsibilities for the welfare of students. Information is readily available to students in age-appropriate formats and at lots of different locations. Staff who have contact with students are very familiar with the college's provision and this helps them provide consistent signposting to other services that is accurate and timely. Students are very positive about the support and guidance they receive and identify this as a valuable aspect to living at the college.

Students have very good access to campus refectory services, a shop and facilities in residential accommodation for cooking and eating. Students benefit from the catering team's strong commitment to provide freshly prepared food, which is appealing and meets with the need to provide healthy balanced menus and choice. Special diets are catered for and are part of an extensive array of hot and cold food available at every mealtime. The refectories regularly provide a range of world foods that embraces and represents other cultures and countries. Students are able to influence menus by a number of well-established consultation initiatives. The college is committed to making sure the varied needs of students are comprehensively met by providing a high quality and flexible catering service.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Students' safety and protection are given a very high priority, which results in an outstanding contribution to safeguarding and welfare practices. Staff approach their roles and responsibilities in a conscientious and professional manner. They embrace the values of the college by placing students' safety and well-being at the centre of everything the college does. Students confirm this by clearly stating how safe they feel, recognising the contribution the college makes to this area of residential life.

The college has a very clear procedure for responding to child protection concerns

and have staff who link together to ensure safeguarding matters are appropriately addressed. Staff are professional and responsible in their approach to any concerns and their knowledge clearly reflects the college's policies in practice. Leaders and nominated officers are actively involved in promoting their roles and college wide advertising of key safeguarding information is effective in raising awareness of how to report a concern. In addition, nominated officers provide safeguarding training across all campuses for all staff to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear. This has resulted in a greater awareness and understanding of safeguarding matters across all college sites.

Staff with responsibilities for safeguarding attend external training as well as keeping up to date with national and local matters that are important in the protection children and young people. Nominated officers are actively involved in raising awareness and educating everyone about personal safety. For instance, concerns linked with use of online social networks are highlighted to improve staff and students' knowledge of the potential risks associated with this form of media.

Staff and students know that bullying is not tolerated and quick action is taken regarding any information that bullying might be taking place. The college has a clear behaviour management policy with established staff practices and training, guidance and information for students about behavioural expectations. College staff provide clear boundaries and regularly talk to students about their behaviour when these expectations are not met. In particular, the warden teams are focused on promoting respect and consideration for others and encouraging behaviours that promote a comfortable residential environment. Sometimes more formal sanctions are used to address poor behaviour and a record is kept of these circumstances so managers can monitor the use of any formal disciplinary measures. Many students state that the college is fair when dealing with their behaviour, but some stated that the range of sanctions used are too narrow.

Student information is handled in a professional and sensitive manner. Confidentiality is respected and information is only shared with necessary parties and with students' consent. Students state that the college respects their privacy and confidentiality. The college has a clear complaints procedure and information about this is available to students and parents in a range of formats. Students state that the college responds quickly to any complaints raised by them, in addition to being actively supported to raise any concerns or issues that they may have.

Students expressed confidence in the safety and security of the college and residential accommodation. Students learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they practice emergency escape drills. Staff receive fire training to ensure they know what to do in an emergency. Procedures are in place to ensure residential accommodation is safe; for instance, thorough and frequent tests on fire systems and other electrical equipment are undertaken. The college has thorough risk assessments for all aspects of the premises, grounds and activities, both on and off site. Particular efforts are taken to ensure that all areas used by students are free from avoidable hazards. High emphasis is placed on safeguarding by the management team ensuring student safety is promoted.

Staff recruitment files contain details of required recruitment checks that have taken place prior to staff taking up their residential responsibilities. This includes an appropriate enhanced criminal record bureau check. Visitors to the college such as contractors and maintenance staff are either supervised directly or have completed necessary checks to determine their suitability to work independently. Every student, employee and visitor is required to wear a formal college identity badge to ensure everyone can be identified with a legitimate reason for being on any of the campuses. This is a new development, which is aimed at further enhancing the safety and security for students.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Students benefit from excellent levels of personal support. Students have written information about the established network of support systems across college campuses, which includes contact details of external support agencies. International support staff also ensure they are available to overseas students when required or called upon for help. This ensures that the college can respond quickly to the needs of overseas students and that they are not disadvantaged by living and studying in another country.

There is an excellent system of tutor and welfare support for all students who need help with academic work or welfare matters. This results in student support that is consistently matched to individual needs. This approach is underpinned by the college's aim to help each individual achieve their potential and academic goals. There is a dedicated warden team for residential students and the communication between staff and other student support services is seamless and effective. However, college managers and staff continue to explore and develop systems and practices to improve and enhance responses to student need. This has resulted in the development and implementation of an online risk register to inform those staff that need to know about welfare or academic concerns. This information can be shared quickly, linking key staff to important information about student welfare needs.

The college successfully promotes an environment where students learn to be respectful of the backgrounds and circumstances of others and where differences are appreciated and accepted. Many residential students describe their residential experiences as being part of a large or extended family. Students live in a friendly, relaxed residential community where respectful values are promoted. For instance, the college welcomes all religious denominations and encourages tolerance and respect. This outlook is matched by a newly developed faith room on one of the campuses. It is equipped in a way that supports its use by any religion or faith. Thought and consideration has been given to the arrangements to ensure the provision can meet the needs of the college's diverse student population.

Students are able to develop interests in a range of group and individual sports activities with input from staff and the college's sports and activities coordinator. The

developing programme of events provides students with opportunities to further develop their relationships and experiences. Social events are well managed, accounting for the different age ranges that exist on the campuses. International students are provided with a programme of trips to explore cultural and tourist destinations across the country.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The college actively seeks the views and opinions of students. They benefit a variety of ways in which they can express their views and influence the way in which individual campuses operate. For example: improvements have been made to a common room used by students; gym opening times have been changed; popular foods reinstated to menus, and refectory times have been adjusted.

There is a growing number of student representatives across areas of the college's operation, as well as students being able to use well-established processes to give their feedback about matters that are important to them. Although consultation is very effective, the college is embarking on a process of reorganising and reconstituting student bodies to match more familiar arrangements and further develop and improve involvement and participation. There is a committed, keen and enthusiastic approach to these changes that is driven by a willingness to enhance and improve student involvement and participation.

College staff work in partnership with parents to ensure students receive the right support and attention. Staff understand the value and importance of communication and contact with parents. Parents can contact welfare staff at any time and this is encouraged as part of the college's approach to ensure students can learn and succeed. Students have access to a range of ways to keep in touch with family and friends, which also includes appropriate arrangements for visitors to residential accommodation. Students and parents are fully involved in the college's admission and induction processes for first year arrivals. These arrangements are well established and successful in helping students settle into residential and college life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The college provides a comfortable and safe living environment for all residential students. The college has an ongoing estates development plan, which is implemented in practice. As a result of the college's plans, some students now live in newly built residencies, which are of a very high standard. This significant investment has improved the quality of residential accommodation offered to students and demonstrates the college's commitment to providing a quality residential service.

Each student has an individual bedroom with a number having en-suite facilities. Students have access to communal areas in each residency, which includes basic

kitchens and common rooms. Overall, students are very satisfied with the accommodation provided but some at the Pershore campus would prefer their recreational area to be better organised. Students who are under eighteen are accommodated across a number of mixed residential houses but staff are still able to monitor their welfare closely.

A small number of overseas students under the age of eighteen 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 vetted and suitable to provide the necessary facilities that students require. The accommodation is monitored during use and student feedback is gained on a regular basis to ensure that what is provided meets their individual needs. Students are very positive about the arrangements and their experiences of living with host families.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The management and organisation of the college's welfare and accommodation provision is outstanding. Managers ensure that the welfare of students is given first consideration and the college communicates this approach clearly to staff and students. There are enough staff available for students and they are trained and supported to deliver consistent, high-quality residential services. The style of management ensures that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and that students feel that the college is run with their welfare and safety as the primary concern.

Managers have an excellent insight into how well students are being looked after. Staff are led by a conscientious and effective residential services manager who is accountable to a senior director within the college. Services are delivered professionally and consistently because staff work in partnership with each other and other college teams. They are also provided with clear guidance about their roles from competent and supportive senior wardens.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The college has a range of policies that relate to equal opportunity and understanding diversity. The college's ethos is carried out in practice and all students are treated as individuals with equal concern and consideration. The college welcomes referrals from any cultural, ethnic, racial or religious background and offers each student a tolerant and respectful environment. Students are viewed positively and their involvement in college life is actively promoted irrespective of their circumstances or where they are from.

The college provides very clear and detailed information about residential services in a number of languages, to parents, students and staff. There are excellent policies and residential practice guidance, kept under review and known by staff, helping to ensure students are looked after well during their time at the college. In addition, student welfare is promoted by well-established and extensive monitoring systems.

Managers have a clear overview of residential operations, which helps to ensure that students are supported in a consistent and safe manner. These arrangements guard against complacency and help deliver consistent, high quality residential services.

Many changes, developments and improvements have taken place because of the college's self-assessment and evaluation programmes. For instance: new accommodation checks have been instigated to help improve standards of cleanliness and hygiene; key staff have been trained as trainers in an accredited model of behaviour management; developments in safeguarding practice and training have resulted in a greater awareness of roles and responsibilities and student accommodation and facilities continue to be developed. Examples of developments that have just started are: the expansion of the nursing service across all three campuses and the instigation of a new programme of questionnaires for parents and students to help profile individual needs. These developments are a direct result of the college's quality monitoring and wide-spread consultation processes.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure use of discipline students is fair and appropriate. Specifically, review the college's student disciplinary policy to ensure the range of sanctions currently being used are proportionate to student behaviours (NMS 4)
- ensure students have access to a range of recreational areas. Specifically, ensure the location of common room areas at the Pershore campus are sufficient for the age range of students using them. (NMS 41)