

Hadlow College

Inspection report for further education college

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Inspector	Kevin Whatley / Liz Driver
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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

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 180 further education students, aimed at those whose courses require early morning duties or who live too far away to make attendance practical.

The college has three other smaller sites in Kent. A majority of the accommodation is situated on the main site; all under 18 residential accommodation is found on the main site. The college has developed an extensive range of partnerships with other local educational providers as well as in the business community.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At the time of inspection there were approximately 90 residential students being accommodated in the 16 to 18 age range.

Students spoke most positively about their lives at the college, notably the level of support and guidance they received from residential and curriculum staff. All of the students spoken with indicated that they felt respected and looked after. Similarly students who expressed an opinion stated categorically that they felt safe with issues such as bullying being extremely rare.

The college place the quality of the student experience as fundamental to it's ethos with an outstanding approach toward safeguarding and equality and diversity placing the individual needs of students at it's core. Students are enabled to contribute their views, ideas and thoughts easily and are clearly involved in all key decisions which have an impact on their daily lives in the college.

An excellent and committed staff team ensure students are supported to achieve academically, while simultaneously being encouraged to develop and learn as young adults in all aspects of college life.

The college is led by an outstanding leadership and management team who continue to build on excellent standards of care and practice to improve service provision further.

The overall provision was deemed outstanding in all areas with no recommendations made.

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Residential students receive an excellent standard of health care. The college successfully promotes independence with thoughtful support being provided when needed to assist students in managing their own health matters. Overall the college achieves an excellent balance between independence and support in relation to health matters.

Highly effective systems ensure students health needs are identified prior to admission and subsequently met while at the college. Individual health care plans are drawn up with the student and parent/carer and shared with college staff on a need to know basis. Confidentiality of information is highly considered by all staff at all times. Students benefit from close working partnerships between the college and other health professionals within the local community. This includes the medical centre and pharmacist who assist in providing a thorough service to them. As a result students are able to have easy access to appropriate health care support, guidance and intervention in a timely manner. The team support students in managing a range of health and personal problems and assist students in accessing specialist professionals such as the sexual health nurse and college counsellor. College staff are trained to administer first aid and students are responsible for and administer their own medication and do so efficiently.

Students receive outstanding pastoral care which places their individual needs first. Staff are fully aware of the difficulties some young people face when being away from home for the first time and provide a comprehensive induction programme to help them settle in. The on-site student support services team are held in high regard by students who commented most positively on the care they are provided with. For instance one student noted 'staff are very helpful,' while another stated 'the wardens and staff are always there to help;' such comments were indicative of the feedback gained from students throughout the inspection.

The college place considerable emphasis on encouraging students to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Examples include a large number of sporting and recreational opportunities and the appropriate promotion of healthy eating. In addition the college rules such as zero tolerance to illegal drugs, and a pragmatic approach to smoking, supported by providing smoking cessation groups, combine to promote living healthily as a core principle of college life. The student bar is strictly managed with students confirming that anyone under 18 'never get served alcohol.'

Students receive an excellent standard of catering provision. The college utilise the services of an external company who work very closely with college staff to ensure a healthy, well balanced and nutritious diet is delivered. Residential students are entitled to two main meals per day, but can choose when to take these each day. The college have superb systems in place which highlight students eating patterns, including regularity of meals taken and their content. The process is discreet with any issues identified being addressed swiftly through a sensitive, caring and supportive approach.

Students benefit from an excellent approach whereby food is closely monitored to ensure it comes from sustainable resources, is additive free and locally sourced where ever possible. Students receive food in line with the departments `providence of supply charter` which educates students about the food and its origin. There is a clear and strong message being delivered by the catering department that fully fits in with the ethos of the land based college. The catering department received a 4 star award from the local borough council at the last environmental health visit in March 2011.

Alongside a consistently high standard of food provision the college strive to improve the quality and service being offered at every opportunity. Student consultation is fundamental to the college's ethos of the quality of the student experience as being of paramount importance. A vast majority of students stated they enjoyed the food with comment cards available in the canteen for any further ideas or suggestions to be made; students felt in the whole that their views are considered and acted upon when requests are made. A number of initiatives have been welcomed by the students including the recent change to lighting for the evening meal time. Students have access to an on site shop and facilities in their accommodation blocks to prepare and cook for themselves.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

A robust and comprehensive approach to health and safety ensures students are kept as safe as possible. All necessary actions are taken to highlight and reduce areas of concern with an appropriate balance maintained between risk awareness and allowing students to participate fully in all aspects of college life. Rigorous systems including the routine servicing of fire fighting equipment, alarm testing and regular evacuation drills ensure students understand what to do in the event of an incident occurring. Joint strategic planning and training with the local authority and emergency services further cements the college's position of being prepared for situations of potential risk or danger.

The college nurtures an outstanding culture of safety with excellent policies and procedures being enacted in practice. Safeguarding is embedded in the ethos of the college in a manner which is holistic and robust. For instance the stringent manner in which the compulsory wearing of identification badges for all students, staff and visitors at all times is enforced. All staff, irrespective of their roles or responsibilities,

receive a comprehensive induction programme which includes child protection awareness. Continued training ensures staff are kept up to date with current procedures, while designated members of the senior management team make up an extremely experienced, knowledgeable and pro-active safeguarding team. The high regard placed on keeping students safe is continued throughout the college with key responsibilities being taken on by the members of the governing body. Students stated categorically that they felt 'safe' at the college. No child protection matters have been recorded since the last inspection.

The notion of mutual respect permeates the atmosphere of the college with a zero tolerance attitude toward inappropriate behaviour of any kind including issues of bullying. A strong sense of community is evident across the college with students consistently encouraged to consider the wider context of negative attitudes, thoughts or behaviours. No students raised any concerns that such behaviour took place and indeed aired strong views that they themselves would challenge any such incidents.

The college implement clear and appropriate rules and boundaries which are made obvious to students on their arrival. Students say they are made fully aware of what the expectations of behaviour are and feel they are treated 'fairly' and with 'respect'. Observations of student behaviour and conduct and interactions with them throughout the inspection were exemplary.

An excellent process is in place to respond to matters of concern or complaint. Students confirmed that they clearly understood how to make a complaint or raise issues. The openness of the college and approachability of staff ensures students can express their views easily. The college take all issues raised most seriously with swift responses made to matters arising. Coupled with this is a commitment to address any situation in a forward thinking manner thus leading to improved outcomes. Very few complaints have been made since the last inspection.

The privacy of students is taken with the utmost regard. Toilet and bathing facilities allow for appropriate personal privacy. No student raised any concerns that they were not allowed their privacy and no areas of concern were identified to suggest this was not the case.

A comprehensive approach ensures students are only cared for by staff who have been rigorously checked. All staff undergo all required checks before being allowed to work with them, while any person who may have contact with students who are not employed by the college are subject to the same procedures. This includes spouses of employees who live on site and regular contractors. Visitors and external contractors to the college are accompanied. A rolling programme of re-checking for existing staff is in place.

All accommodation is secure from persons without permission to enter. A highly efficient electronic entry system ensures student accommodation is as safe as can be expected. Such a system also allows for close monitoring of usage with each student being identified by their particular fob. Since the last inspection CCTV has been

installed inside the entrance halls to each accommodation block which offers increased levels of monitoring.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Students receive excellent personal support and guidance and say they feel cared for and respected. A responsive and joined up approach enables students to participate fully in college life. A firmly established student support team provide consistently high levels of input to support students with their individual needs. Alongside accommodation staff and managers, students are further supported through a comprehensive network of guidance and support across the college which includes student tutors, curriculum staff, the college counsellor, health staff and the college Chaplain. Students spoken with were very clear that they had numerous members of staff they could confidently turn to for personal guidance or to discuss a problem. Students commented most positively about staff and the 'hard work' they constantly put in stating that 'the wardens and staff are very helpful whenever I have a problem;' 'college has boosted my confidence and independence considerably.'

The approach by the student support team in particular allows students an appropriate level of independence. An excellent balance is maintained between looking after young adults who may be living away from home for the first time and encouraging them to learn life skills including laundry, cooking and coping with peer relationships in a community environment. One student noted, 'college have bent over backwards to help me...and have helped so much.' Such a sense of community was further commented on by other students who stated, 'my block is awesome....we all support each other.'

Students have their particular religious or faith beliefs acknowledged and respected. A multi-faith room offers students a place of peace and calm for them to use whenever they wish. A majority of the under 18 students are from the south of England and represent such demographics within it's cultural make up; the college accommodate a relatively small number of post 18 students from overseas. The college have links with a local chaplain who visits on a weekly basis and provides an extremely non judgemental and young person centred approach, such as through a coffee club.

The whole staff team work extremely hard to maintain clear lines of communication which ensures each student receives appropriate help and guidance. An appropriate balance is maintained between protecting the personal information of students and sharing it with colleagues when appropriate. Regular meetings occur between residential and education staff to ensure the pastoral and learning needs of each student are considered jointly.

Students benefit greatly from living and learning in an environment that is clearly inclusive. The college fervently promote equality and diversity and strive to enhance the sense of community at every opportunity. Since the last inspection all staff

undertake equality and diversity training as a key component of their induction while students themselves are provided with information and guidance including what constitutes discrimination. An example of such a positive approach is seen in the information given out to students on their arrival regarding equality and diversity which confirms the valuing of difference as a cornerstone of personal development. Students stated, 'we all support each other' and 'this place is like my family.' No student raised any concerns of discrimination or of being treated unfairly.

Students enjoy a wide range of leisure activities which they have a voice in choosing. Students are encouraged to participate in sporting and recreational activities. Each week a number of events are available such as trips off site to go bowling or visit the cinema, while activities on the college campus include themed night parties and quizzes. A large common room offers students a relaxed environment with pool, music room, large tv's and a snack bar. A studio has also been set up equipped with a large variety of musical instruments with students able to take up free tuition opportunities. A well managed licensed student bar is situated in the centre of the campus and provides another area to meet friends or watch tv. Students noted that 'the facilities and activities are fantastic; there are always fun things to do.' In addition the college has an active student union that organises social events both on campus and in the local area. The nature of the land based college means the main campus is situated amidst rolling countryside offering considerable space and relaxation. As in keeping with running sports courses, additional facilities include football and rugby pitches and a gym which are all available for residential students to use.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

An excellent approach ensures the views of students are actively sought and considered. Residential student experience is fundamental to how the college plan and operate. Numerous opportunities are available for students to express their views including the college council, student question time with senior managers, and the 'learner voice' user group forum. The college have also utilised an innovative IT programme 'you said, we did' which allows students questions to be answered via an on line system. The college clearly take consultation seriously with the chair of governors attending forums and a student representative sitting on the governing body. Recent changes brought about via responding to student ideas include improved recycling options and the development of a food focus group. One student commented that 'there is an improvement/suggestion questionnaire which we can fill out; we always have the opportunity to say how we feel.'

Students are supported to maintain private contact with their parents/carers and families. A majority of students confirmed they had their own mobile phones and laptops, however should they wish a student telephone is provided in the student support area. Most residential students go home at weekends unless they have duties to do as required by their equine or farming courses.

A comprehensive programme of induction ensures students are made fully aware of all aspects of college on arrival. The first week of college is an induction week which includes informal sessions to meet residential and education staff. Students said they were made to feel 'very welcome and looked after' when they started at the college. A comprehensive student guide is available which provides a most useful and young person friendly view of college life with key information including contact details for independent support networks.

Students are provided with outstanding levels of support and advice in preparing them for life after college. The college have established excellent links with the local business community notably those associated with land based careers. Many students undertake work experience as part of their studies and in doing so gain valuable life skills in the working environment. Most recently the college arranged and facilitated a careers fair as part of it's enrichment programme which included the attendance of a wide variety of local employers from the farming, horticultural and equine community alongside representatives from the armed forces and national sporting organisations. Lectures and guidance sessions were also offered to enable students to prepare themselves for their next steps. The event was extremely well attended by both students and their parents and was seen to be an extremely worthwhile and positive development. The college are further developing support networks for students once they have left such as through it's alumni association.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Student accommodation is extremely well organised and arranged to provide appropriate safeguards. All under 18 accommodation is set on the main site and very near to the student support building; male and female accommodation is separate. An acknowledgement of students age and maturity as young adults, allows them to have friends of the opposite sex visit them in house up to a certain hour. No overnight stays are allowed for those of the opposite sex, but friends outside the college can stay with prior arrangement and consent from parents/carers. Students are responsible for the behaviour of their guests and ensuring any visitors do not impinge on the general atmosphere of the college. The process appears to be very well respected with students taking on such responsibilities appropriately.

Students are provided with a very good standard of accommodation which offers them a high standard of facilities and comfort. The accommodation blocks are of a 1960's design with an on-going refurbishment plan now nearing completion. Each block accommodates approximately ten students with an adequate amount of shower and toilet facilities being shared. A shared kitchen is also provided in each block which offers standard cooking facilities. Several students mentioned that a number of cookers did not 'heat up properly' however on further examination these were found to provide sufficient support catering facilities to the main meal provision; students are provided with two main meals in the canteen each day. Bedrooms are of a reasonable size with all buildings being maintained to a good standard both decoratively and structurally. Laundry facilities are provided free in the

nearby student support building. As previously noted each accommodation block is protected by key fob entry systems, with internal telephone links in place to contact wardens day and night.

The college are committed to providing as environmentally friendly an environment as possible with refurbishment works being completed to reflect this. For instance the accommodation blocks have been fitted with much more energy efficient lighting systems and sensor activated on/off timers. These moves support the colleges carbon neutral plan with students engaged with environmental promotion as seen with their recent requests for increased recycling processes being introduced.

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

Comprehensive assessments ensure that any student having to attend activities off site or stay away as part of their course have any identified risks fully considered. As in keeping with the colleges culture of safety extensive risk assessments are compiled for any activities requiring students to be away from the campus overnight such as sporting trips or work based placements. Full information was seen about the nature and suitability of any accommodation being provided.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A wealth of information is available which clearly sets out the aims and principles of the college and services provided to students in general and for residential students in particular. An excellent guide is made available on arrival which informs students of the expectations of them and what can be expected from the college in return. An extremely useful website provides comprehensive information regarding the whole college which is easy to negotiate around.

Student welfare is addressed rigorously with an outstanding approach to assessment and planning identifying and reducing risks whenever they are apparent. Risk assessments are in place which cover all possible areas of potential harm. Risk assessments are extensively used in relation to activities, facilities and equipment, while staff responsible for health and safety are clear about their roles and specific responsibilities. All assessments are completed to an extremely high standard and routinely reviewed by staff with sufficient expertise and knowledge. As noted previously in this report, risks are suitably acknowledged and assessed but not seen as a barrier to full student participation.

Record keeping is maintained to an excellent standard with information securely stored and appropriately addressed. When personal information is required to be shared amongst staff it is done sensitively and respectfully and only for the benefit and welfare of students. No students raised concerns about not having their personal information appropriately handled.

An excellent balance is maintained between keeping students safe and allowing them appropriate freedom and independence. Students say they feel safe but not stifled by overly close supervision although acknowledging that staff are always available should they need them. Students also felt that staff treated them as responsible young adults and with respect. Accommodation staff are available 24 hours a day with a dedicated staff team providing a consistent and robust system of support, guidance and care.

Extremely robust policies and procedures are in place which are delivered in practice by staff who clearly understand them. All policies and procedures were found to be comprehensive and covered every aspect of care practice. Such guidance is viewed as working documents and clearly relate to the realities of implementation in practice being reviewed regularly and amended when required. Staff displayed a sound appreciation of college procedures and indeed the wider context of legislation and practice in the residential care arena.

Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and are provided with outstanding induction, training and professional development opportunities. A solid staffing structure is in place with all parties understanding their roles, responsibilities and duties. Accommodation staff appreciate the expectations placed on them and strive to offer excellent standards of care practice consistently. Staff felt extremely well supported and guided and confirmed they received regular formal supervision alongside continued support on a daily basis. Those with managerial or supervisory responsibilities fully comprehend their tasks and fulfil their positions with commitment and drive.

A comprehensive programme of induction involves all staff completing compulsory elements including safeguarding, equality and diversity and anti-bullying training. Staff felt the quality of such an induction was invaluable, providing them with a focused and most beneficial theoretical and practical guide to caring and supporting students in a residential environment. Continued training and development opportunities ensure staff are kept fully up to date with good care practices, changes in legislation and the latest guidance within the sector. A robust monitoring process ensure staff attendance and engagement in training occurs routinely thus also maintaining excellent records of their career development. Further staff career development opportunities are supported and encouraged where appropriate, such as pursuing qualifications in therapeutic interventions including music therapy. Such an approach is indicative of the value in which the college place in it's accommodation staff.

The approach toward equality and diversity is outstanding. The college place the individual needs of students at it's core with equality and diversity a central theme to the culture and experience of living and learning. A key strength of the college is it's ability to balance the personal needs of students and development as young adults in their own right, while simultaneously supporting their educational goals. The atmosphere across college is wholly inclusive with no particular course or individual being seen or experienced as anything other than equal.

Students and staff alike benefit from outstanding leadership and management. Excellent support, guidance and dynamism ensures the college places the needs of students as paramount. The college has responded to the challenges of the current financial climate with vigour and vision while maintaining the quality of the student experience. Similarly the governing body places full confidence in the leadership team while they themselves take a full and active role in the monitoring and development of the college.