

Doncaster College for the Deaf

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 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

Doncaster College for the Deaf provides education and training to Deaf and Hearing Impaired learners and those with Communication difficulties from the age of 16. The college offers a range of academic and vocational courses. Students under the age of 18 years occupy Darley Lodge and Greenaway Lodge.

The college works within a total communication environment with students free to choose their preferred method of communication.

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 old, for whom the college provides accommodation. All the key national minimum standards (NMS) for further education colleges were inspected. The college has taken action to meet the two recommendations made at the previous inspection. The college exceeds the vast majority of the national minimum standards.

The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is outstanding. This is underpinned by the excellent care students receive which is delivered in a calm atmosphere by caring staff that are highly skilled and committed to their work. Students are treated with dignity and respect at all times. They are empowered to make a positive contribution towards their college life.

This very positive, announced inspection found two minor areas for improvement to ensure the college meet all parts of the national minimum standards. This relates to some risk assessments that are not up to date and the continued improvements to the residential lodges. However, these matters do not impact on outcomes for students in any significant way.

Improvements since the last inspection

Prompt action to address shortfalls identified at the last welfare inspection reflects the capacity of the college to strengthen the provision of care. This extends to students being better informed about the college's statement of purpose. The majority of the shower and washing facilities in the residential provision have been refurbished, albeit this programme of improvements is not yet complete. Also, the recordings of fire drills are now more detailed and staff development continues.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Students' health and well-being is effectively promoted and there is excellent communication between the designated professionals at the college with medical and welfare responsibilities. This healthcare team ensure that the support staff are informed about specific areas where students may need health support or medical intervention. These arrangements offer strong support for students whilst keeping sensitive issues private and confidential. One student stated that, 'when I am feeling poorly, the staff always look after me'. The nurse, audiologist, and speech and language therapist know students' health histories from the point of enrolment and health issues are not a barrier to attending the college. This aids students' integration into college life. Medical records are held confidentially and there is effective monitoring of accidents and illness. Medication is tightly managed and monitored. Clear procedures are followed for the management, secure storage and administration of prescribed medication. This ensures students receive correct medication important to their health.

Students are extremely well supported in relation to any health or personal problems; they are able to confidently identify staff that they can go to for advice and support. In addition, students have access to an external, professional confidential counselling service who can sign post students to other services as required. This means that students can choose from a wide range of ways to access health information, services and help. Students stay healthy and engage in active lifestyles during their time at the college. For example, they participate in sports and gym activities. The college's personal and social development curriculum crosses over into the residential provision and means students continue to receive clear advice on matters such as health and relationships.

The college employs an external catering service. The menu plan offers a varied and nutritional diet and provides extensive choice and the opportunity for students to experience international cuisine. The catering team is highly skilled and knowledgeable and deliver special and complex diets. The vast majority of students say that the standard of food provided is very good and food is of a high standard. Facilities are in place in each lodge for the provision of all meals at the weekend. Meal times play an integral role in the success of the 24-hour curriculum theme days. This meaningful experience helps encourage students to experiment with new foods whilst increasing their appreciation of multiculturalism. Students say that this is a particularly enjoyable part of the weekend activities. Pathway mentors work alongside students to help them increase their knowledge of basic nutrition and to receive a balanced diet.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Close, effective liaison between all staff promotes a shared understanding of students' needs and secures a consistent approach to care and support. Arrangements for safeguarding students are stringent. This extends to senior staff undertaking safer recruitment training as a means of enhancing the college's commitment to safeguarding students under their care. All staff are suitably vetted with close attention paid to their recruitment. In addition, the residential service has a fully trained designated person for child protection and safeguarding matters. The relationship between the staff and the designated officer provides a strong foundation of understanding about responsibilities for the protection of students in the college. All support staff receive safeguarding training; this is then regularly revisited.

Safeguarding within the college is steered by the strong leadership team and promoted throughout the residential provision. Comprehensive risk assessments relating to all aspects of safety on the campus are in place. This includes students being protected from hazards associated with fire and electrical safety. The security teams are vigilant and students appreciate this. The risk assessment in relation to the accommodation areas has not been reviewed in a timely fashion but this does not affect the current safety measures in place. Students report feeling safe, protected and valued by staff. Comments such as, 'my privacy is respected' and, 'I can trust the staff with anything' show that staff care practices have an impact on the outcome for students' safety.

Staff appreciate the serious implications of bullying and potential harm to students' welfare. There is a commitment by staff to tackle all types of bullying through initiatives and strategies that improve behaviour and increase awareness. Students are equally well informed about the impact of bullying. One said, 'I feel I have been bullied in the past and the staff sorted it out'. A clear threshold and hierarchy of techniques for behaviour management takes account of the students' age and the seriousness of the situation at any given point. Staff support enables students to cope with their emotions and to practise learning strategies to help them manage their behaviour. This avoids behaviour escalating to a level where students become distressed and place themselves and others at risk of harm. Because of this highly effective approach, the use of restraint in the college is rare. One student commented, 'staff have helped me recognise when I am stressed.'

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is terrific engagement between students and staff. This is particularly enhanced through the comprehensive total communication system which enables students to make informed decisions. Excellent systems, including a dedicated external counselling team, ensure students receive a high level of personal support.

There is an established network of support systems across the college which students are made aware of via written information that also includes contact details of a range of external support agencies. Information is provided in a manner that helps them to understand how to make a complaint and how to exercise their rights. One student said, 'I use the students council to complain about things and they improve'. These strong arrangements and relationships give students the knowledge that they will be protected. Students say, 'I can talk with the staff team if I am unhappy about anything.' The holistic staff approach means students have individual support that takes account of their different needs reflecting race, culture, religion and ability.

In addition, the role of the enrichment coordinators within the residential provision enables the 24 hour curriculum to be positively integrated into students' everyday lives. An example of this is the discussion nights that take place. Students say that they enjoy discussing current affairs from the local and national press. Three students also shared their excitement about their involvement in drama workshops and the production of a musical. A group of students are working with the local fire and rescue service. Students were visiting the local station that day to celebrate their completion in a fire fighting experience course. The students experience an extensive range of activities and use all facilities at the college including the gymnasium, leisure bar, sporting amenities and library. In addition, students have excellent access to the community where they can extend their social networking. Their enjoyment of these varied activities is reflected strongly in their positive comments such as, 'there is always lots to do at the college' and 'the staff make sure we can have access to all the facilities in the area'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The whole staff team treat students with courtesy, honesty and respect. The college has a number of mechanisms that assist the students to engage in meaningful consultation that is helping to develop the college and residential provision. These include the election of student representatives for each residence, college council, student surveys, along with specific focus groups. There are excellent levels of student involvement and an emphasis on inclusion, which is a thread that runs throughout the college. The college has developed an effective learner involvement strategy. Students have active representation on the student council. Students on the council state that, 'the management team always listen to us and keep us informed if there is a delay in any decision making'. This shows that their views are taken account of and acted on.

Strong links exist between the college and families to ensure the holistic needs of students are fully met. The pathway mentors role extends to maintaining positive engagement with families, including telephone contact.

There are many communication systems available to promote and assist students to have contact with their parents and families. Students favour the use of minicomms, telephone text, internet and letters. The college maintains regular contact with

parents and welcomes their visits.

Admissions to the college are planned effectively to meet the specific needs of individual students. Once stays commence, all students have a comprehensive care plan that identifies pastoral and educational needs, including all aspects of health, and which specifies clear targets. Excellent support enables students to make the best of the opportunities offered within the residential provision. There are striking examples of where the college has helped particular students overcome significant barriers associated with their autism and behaviour traits. Some students have previously felt unsafe in the community, with symptoms such as disorientation and anxiety. Due to the progress made with the support of their pathway mentor, they no longer struggle using public transport and being in public places. This demonstrates how the college enables students to make great progress and have a fulfilled life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The accommodation meets students' varying needs, both in terms of their care and in developing their independence and the college pays close attention to the allocation of accommodation. Students report that living in the lodges is a positive experience which promotes friendships. The college has two lodging areas. The lodges each have their own individual character and are separated by gender. On-site facilities include the sports hall and leisure bar, swimming pool and a well-equipped cafeteria.

Each lodge has a pleasant lounge area, study area with a number of useful computers and a modern kitchen. Sleeping accommodation is in single rooms. There are sufficient showers, washbasins and toilets in all areas. Some areas within the lodges have been refurbished to a very good standard and there are clear plans in place to further improve the bathing facilities in the near future. This is not having a detrimental outcome for students. Both lodges have a high standard of cleanliness due to a very efficient and dedicated team of domestic staff employed by the college. The college is located within two miles of the town centre, with good access to public transport, leisure and shopping facilities. Students say that they enjoy doing the shopping at the local food outlets.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There is very effective management and organisation within the college which ensures consistent support in relation to student welfare. The senior management have been through a period of restructure. Both staff and students report that they have felt the positive impact this has had on the college as a whole. There is a host of essential information for students about the college and accommodation arrangements, helping to make arrivals, induction and departures, a smooth process.

The statement of purpose and practice has been reviewed and is readily available to prospective students

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The whole staff team treat students fairly on the basis of need and do not discriminate against students based on their sexuality, race, culture, heritage, religion or beliefs. All staff are provided with clear guidance about anti-discriminatory practice and expected standards of professional behaviour. There is a strong determination to develop equality and diversity strategies, as the college sees this as integral to the needs of students. The college is currently working towards an award for investors in diversity.

The college provides an environment where students differences are acknowledged, and they are treated fairly and with equal concern. Staff passionately promote students social inclusion within the college and wider community. All staff are fluent in British Sign Language (BSL) and have linked with the local police force so that students can deliver deaf awareness training to new and existing police recruits.

Excellent staffing levels ensure pastoral needs are constantly met. The care staff team, known as pathway mentors, are experts. They have the strong support of the college's pathway management team to sustain the high level of care provided, including regular training opportunities and meetings. The excellent contribution from the senior management team and governing body ensure rigorous monitoring of the residential provision. These arrangements create a sound quality assurance mechanism to assess the quality of care in the interest of students.

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 that the system of assessing risk in the boarding accommodation is effective and up to date (NMS 42.7)
- continue with the planned programme to ensure that all areas of toilet and washing facilities are maintained to a good standard. (NMS 40.3)