

Reaseheath FE College

Inspection report for further education college

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Inspector	Karen Forster / Robert Curr
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Information about the college

Reaseheath College is a specialist provider of vocational education and training in further education (FE) and higher education (HE) for businesses, industries and communities which are mainly, but not exclusively, rural and land based. The college is situated close to the market town of Nantwich in Cheshire. Six halls of residence on the Reaseheath campus accommodate learners aged from 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection there were 158 resident learners aged 16 to 18 on roll. The inspection was conducted within the college's last week of term so the numbers of students in residence were reduced. The college does not arrange lodgings for students with host families.

The college's boarding provision was last inspected in February 2010.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Summary report

Overall effectiveness of the provision	outstanding
Outcomes for young people	outstanding
Quality of service	outstanding
Leadership and management	outstanding
Safeguarding	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

Reaseheath's residential provision for students aged between 16 and 18 years is outstanding.

The college's safeguarding arrangements are outstanding, with all staff and students demonstrating an active part in ensuring that students are protected from harm. Staff and students are extremely well supported in this area with robust training and meticulous information sharing.

All of the national minimum standards are met. The college has made exemplary progress since the last inspection. The college has suitably addressed the two shortfalls in minimum standards reported upon at the last inspection and has made major improvements in both of these areas and across the college's residential provision. The timely completion of Disclosure and Barring Scheme checks on all resident adults is now routine practice. The college has re-furnished certain halls of residence to balance the quality of accommodation across all halls. The re-developed roles of staff within the student services and welfare teams has strongly enhanced the quality of care and consistently promotes positive outcomes for resident students. The college's improvement plan is comprehensive and the leadership team have successfully completed their historical plans with clear lines of accountability and a strong shared view of the college's vision.

Staff and students across the college demonstrate a clear commitment to equality and an unequivocal acceptance of every one's differences. This empowers individuals who may have otherwise have felt marginalised.

Communication between residential staff and parents or carers is excellent. Each term, parents or carers receive a feedback questionnaire which ties in closely with the termly review of each students' Individual Residential Development Plan. The gathered views are consistently very positive, for example, last term's results show that 100% of respondents feel that their child has settled well into the college's accommodation. The resident students' verbal and survey responses are very positive about their life at the college. For example, 96% of respondents say that they enjoy their residential experience in college.

Two recommendations for further improvement are made following this inspection. The college should continue to implement the refurbishment programme for halls of residence. The designated staff lead for safeguarding should check that the content of their two yearly refresher training in this area, matches the Local Safeguarding Children's Board standards for inter-agency training.

What should the college do to improve further?

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

- continue to implement the refurbishment programme within the halls of residence
- the designated staff lead for safeguarding should check that the content of their two yearly refresher training in this area, matches the Local Safeguarding

Children's Board standards for inter-agency training.

Outcomes for young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Outcomes for students are outstanding. The resident group have a strong identity and students are very pleased to be part of the provision. Students are highly committed to their academic and social learning programmes, and clearly benefit from the strong support from the welfare team and the safeguarding officers. Individuals know which welfare officer links with their study area and can readily access emotional support via these links. This may include counselling; relationship advice; or substance awareness programmes. This means that students are highly self-aware and able to recognise and secure the help and support they need.

The students benefit enormously from the bespoke Individual Residential Development Plan programme (IRDP). They know that staff will 'stick by them' even when they take risks, but they clearly understand that they are accountable for their behaviours and their impact on themselves and others in the group. Therefore, behaviour around college is very good and students can recognise their own substantial strides within their personal and social development. Students and staff maintain consistently high expectations of behaviour and all parties are clear of the sanctions attached to unacceptable behaviour. Young people value the college's commitment towards them, which includes, for example, ensuring that excluded students have alternative vocational opportunities.

In addition to the termly personal meetings linked to the IRDP programme, students regularly meet collectively within various forums to share ideas and plan for service developments. For example, monthly halls' meetings; Student Association Committee and course representative meetings and the entertainments committee. There is clear feedback to the student group from their suggestions, with the college's 'You Said, We Did' poster campaign. This means that students are strong drivers for change and development and feel extremely well listened too. Individuals readily take up leadership roles and responsibilities within these forums and various other arenas including for example; event management teams; fresher weeks; overseas student forums and the Welsh club.

Students readily engage in the strong inclusive culture within the college. Individuals strongly feel that their personal life-style choices, for example, with regard to sexuality are consistently accepted and promoted across the college. This means that minority groups feel less marginalised and highly empowered. Students engage consistently well in readily available healthcare programmes and opportunities. They can easily access nursing advice which is well received and acted upon.

College leavers enjoy very positive prospects, with 90% of leavers going on to Higher Education programmes or employment. This group benefit from the sound communication between family home and college, so the return home or to independent living is well planned and carefully completed.

Quality of service

The quality of the service is **outstanding**.

The residential provision is well recognised within college as an area of excellence. Students confirm that their academic year in residence has met or exceeded their expectations, and that the college has a high regard with employers and higher education providers. Learners enjoy their fresher weeks and soon overcome their anxieties over their new placement. This positive induction programme is well facilitated by the established students, who work extremely well with student services staff to provide an interesting and enjoyable fresher programme.

Highly effective pre-admission meetings with parents mean that each student's residential plan is very well informed. Subsequent termly meetings with students to update this plan with added input from home, mean that these plans provide a wealth of personal information which is well used by student services, staff and students to plot and record personal developments.

The broad and varied on and off-site activity programme is significantly enhanced by the effective work of the college's sports maker. New, comfortable on site common rooms have been developed that are well used by the student group. A student run entertainment committee facilitate group directed events and well utilised activities. Charitable and community fund-raising is an important part of student life and promotes the college's well developed community participation programmes. For example, a health based donor screening programme was initiated following a student's illness. A core of activity programmes are nil cost and food purchases are priced down to enable students with a variety of financial backgrounds to enjoy activities and eat healthily.

Qualified nursing staff provide a well used clinical service at the college, which has recently been enhanced to provide longer hours on site. This service successfully promotes health care programmes with individuals, such as smoking cessation, weight management, sexual health and minor injury care. Emotional well-being is very well promoted through unobtrusive access to counsellors and welfare officers. Students can self-refer or be signposted by their pastoral staff, which means they benefit from a professional assessment and programme of personal counselling.

There are a broad variety of eating facilities at the college, the main canteen, the deli bar and self-catering facilities within the halls of residence. Food is plentiful and of high quality, the college provides high quality specialised diets in a sensitive manner. Residential accommodation is of a good standard and an on-going refurbishment programme, already firmly in place, has addressed premises shortfalls identified at the last inspection and continues to enhance the standards provided. This means that students can readily relax and feel very comfortable in both their private and communal space.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management are **outstanding**.

The leadership and management of the college is outstanding. The staff group, leadership team and students clearly share and promote a common vision of excellence within the residential provision. All of these parties are consistently motivated to improve on their personal or team performance to enhance the quality of residential care within the college. Honest and comprehensive self-assessment helps the leadership team to identify the improvement drivers and blockers, and swift action is taken to improve practice which is keenly felt by the students. For example, the introduction of round the clock cover by safeguarding officers and additional staff resources within the early evening, mean that students feel safe and have ready access to trusted adults for guidance and specific help with course work.

The staff group understand the content of the strategic plan and contribute heavily towards the content and subsequent objective planning. This means staff at all levels work really well towards achieving the college's priorities and objectives. There are well established and highly effective links between the course leaders and designated welfare officers. This means that personal issues, such as stress, time management, or relationship issues that could impact on learning are picked up with individuals at an early stage. The head of student services is an integral part of the cross college leadership team, and their experienced multi-disciplinary staff team, ensure that all residential routines and programmes run extremely smoothly. This includes the input from internal welfare and safeguarding officers, and highly positive links to counsellors, health professionals and community police personnel. This all round support encompasses all areas of each student's development and life on campus.

The highly effective joint working across the college, is well supported by the commendable competency based programme of professional development for all staff. Team members use it effectively to plot their development with their line manager and the whole programme is clearly based on achieving better outcomes for students. Safeguarding and welfare staff bring an impressive range of social care qualifications and experience to their roles. These groups feel well supported, enjoy their work with students and have ample opportunity to meet with their peers and seniors to reflect on their work and practice. Therefore workers learn from each other and develop their personal practice with students. The college also provides excellent formal learning opportunities with a broad, relevant programme of training.

The IRDP programme means that individual identity and diversity needs are extremely well identified and monitored closely as young people develop and progress into adulthood. This may include, for example, exploring personal sexuality or faith preferences. Individuals who may make different choices than their peers in their lives are well respected and feel equally treated. The recording of personal information is exceptionally well managed to enable all key staff to access current data that is regularly updated. This enables welfare staff to track academic progress

by students and course staff to refer any welfare issues that are impacting on a student's learning.

The level of communication between college and home is exemplary, with student services staff phoning a different proportion of the resident group's parents each week to update on progress. This positive relationship means that complaints are a rarity as concerns can be listened to and acted upon informally. The termly survey collected from parents and the college's swift attention to shortfalls reported within the survey, clearly demonstrates the college's proactive approach to self-improvement.

All key national minimum standards are met and the college has made exemplary progress since the last inspection. The college has suitably addressed the shortfalls in minimum standards reported upon at the last inspection and has made major improvements in both of these areas and across the college's residential provision. The timely completion of Disclosure and Barring Scheme checks on all resident adults is now routine practice. The college has re-furnished certain halls of residence to balance the quality of accommodation across all halls. The re-developed roles of staff within the student services and welfare teams has strongly enhanced the quality of care and consistently promotes positive outcomes for resident students.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding arrangements are **outstanding**

The college's safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. All parties within the college play an active part in ensuring students stay protected from harm. All staff are highly aware of their role in safeguarding all students and employ the necessary knowledge and skills when required to protect individual students. Student services staff use both internal and external networks appropriately within clear and well known child protection procedures. These networks include the welfare officers; counsellors; the Local Authority Designated Officer; local Police force and clinical staff. Students feel safe on campus and their welfare is consistently a primary consideration of the staff team. There is a consistently high level of cross college working between well trained student services and academic staff to safeguard students. This means that the excellent practice within this area can be sustained across the 24 hour curriculum. This practice coupled with the whole college safeguarding training for students and staff are points of exemplary practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.

All students complete safeguarding training at level one and staff at level two, which informs and refreshes them on aspects of keeping safe. The nominated lead staff member for safeguarding completes refresher training in this area every two years as required, however the training content is not checked against the inter-agency training specification provided by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. Consistent training and well implemented, robust procedures related to safer recruitment are firmly in place. These elements provide a meticulous recruitment and vetting

programme for college staff, protecting students from harm.

There is a very strong commitment by all college staff and students to a zero tolerance of bullying, in all its forms. As a result of effective awareness initiatives and anti-bullying strategies, incidents of bullying are very rare. Students from all halls agree that any identified episodes are quickly tackled and effective measures taken to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

A well known and effective, staged disciplinary programme is well established in college. Misdemeanours are fairly dealt with and support and reflection provided for individuals, from key staff, to examine the reasons for the behaviours. This helps students to manage their own behaviour and to learn how their actions affect others. The Individual Residential Development Plans are impressive in content and detail and clearly identify risk management strategies for each student. This means that risk taking behaviours, such as substance or alcohol misuse, are clearly identified and well managed by informed staff and students.

Students are extremely well protected by robust health and safety systems within each hall and those linked to site security. Personal swipe cards, which are checked regularly by staff, mean that non authorised people on campus are readily identified and challenged. Staff supervise signing in and out systems, and hall checks by safeguarding staff mean that missing students are quickly picked up and contact established. These systems are highly effective and mean that there have been no episodes where students have been absent without authority since 2010.

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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of accommodation in further education colleges.