

Walford & North Shropshire College

Inspection report for further education college

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Inspector	Dawn Bennett / Martha Nethaway
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Information about the college

Walford and North Shropshire College was created in 2001 as a result of a merger between Walford College, primarily a specialist land-based college with its main campus near Baschurch and the North Shropshire College, a tertiary college with its main campus in Oswestry.

The Walford campus offers term-time residential accommodation for students between 16-20 years with priority being given to students attending land-based courses for whom daily travel presents particular problems. The campus also provides a base for students attending a football academy with trainee players living on site.

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	good
Outcomes for young people	good
Quality of service	good
Leadership and management	good
Safeguarding	good

Overall effectiveness

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

The overall effectiveness of the residential experience for students is good. Students enjoy college life and achieve positive educational outcomes. Parents are complimentary of the support provided by the warden team. Students also state that the relationships they develop with the warden team is a key strength of this service.

Students feel safe and listened to. They live in an environment that promotes their independence, enables them to develop new social skills and broadens their interests. As a result they mature into responsible adults and self-assured individuals.

The national minimum standards and recommendations from the previous inspection have been fully met. One recommendation has been made for the college to formalise the staff support and supervision system but there are no breaches of the national minimum standards.

The college has continued to improve since the last inspection. The leadership and management team have an excellent understanding of their strengths and areas that require further development.

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):

- ensure there is an appropriate process for the regular review of the performance of each member of staff with responsibilities for supervision of residential students or the provision of student welfare services, by a more senior or experienced member of staff (e.g. through individual supervision meetings or regular staff appraisal system). This specifically relates to developing a formal supervision system (NMS 30.8)

Outcomes for young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Outcomes for students are good and they enjoy their residential experience. They are effectively supported to set educational and social targets and make good personal progress. The residential provision supports them to achieve this. For example, it enables them to easily attend their courses and undertake duties relevant to their learning, such as early morning milking.

The college provides a residential experience that increases students' opportunities of gaining their qualifications. In 2012/13 98% of under-18 year old residential students completed their course compared to a cross college retention rate of 90%. Students have the facilities and support to study effectively. For example, support is provided to students who struggle to complete academic work and independent study by means of assignment workshops. Attendance to these sessions is good and students work in a purposeful setting for a fixed period of time with staff support.

Students lead healthy lifestyles. They have a good understanding of health issues because the college successfully integrates health promotion into their educational and residential learning. For example, courses cover a wide range of topics that include healthy eating, exercise, drug and alcohol awareness and sexual health.

Information on these topics is also available to residential students through discussions with wardens and student services, leaflets and flyers and informative notice boards.

Students are actively encouraged to contribute to the running of the college. Their views and opinions are valued. Students state that the college helps them to develop their own lives and progress through regular discussions and formal 1:1 meetings. They have the opportunity to express their views and influence change regarding residential life through hostel meetings. For example, these identify activities students want run or provide a forum to raise concerns. Students can also feed ideas into the running and development of the college through 'lunch and meet' sessions. These provide an opportunity for students to meet with senior members of staff and college governors.

Students demonstrate good behaviour on the whole. Wardens promote a safe learning environment where mistakes can be discussed and students can learn ways forward. A student stated: 'Wardens are firm but fair. There are clear college rules that we are all made very clear of during induction and throughout our residence.' The college takes a firm stance regarding the use of illegal substances and underage drinking while remaining supportive of students whose behaviour may be of a temporary nature.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for activities and events and many are organised as a result of their own suggestions. As a result many have their horizons broadened and experience new activities. Students are actively involved in the community, taking part in fund-raising events for local charities. For example, students are currently running the 'have a heart' campaign, raising funds to buy a defibrillator.

Some students choose to train as peer mentors, using these skills to support their fellow residential and non-residential peers with both academic and social issues. A student stated: 'Peer mentoring was good fun, doing extra work, being social with different people and learning new skills. From this training I have built my confidence and developed into a sensible young adult.'

Students successfully transition into higher education and employment. All students receive regular and formalised support from course tutors. This is enhanced by wardens and student services who help students in their social and emotional development and in residential activities. Students have good access to information about careers and universities.

Quality of service

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

Residential students receive good quality care and individual support is given high priority. All staff are focused on the students' success, needs and achievements.

Staff are sensitive and supportive. They know the student group well and work effectively in partnership with parents and other external agencies. Consequently the care, social opportunities and educational achievements of residential students are good. Students have an established network of staff including the warden team and student services where they can go for personal support. In addition, each year second year residential students are invited to be peer mentors. They receive special training and support and provide students with another support mechanism. Students are positive about the quality of support they receive.

The induction of residential students is effective and includes the involvement of peer mentors who provide a students' view to life at college. Wardens are able to keep a close watch on new residential learners during this first week as the induction week only involves one and first year students with year two students returning in the second week. This gives staff the time to focus on their individual needs. Students said they found this time valuable. Wardens are proactive, encouraging participation in activities and supporting those who do not appear to be settling in.

Student accommodation continues to be developed by the college in an on-going refurbishment programme. For example, newly built accommodation is accessible to wheelchair users. Accommodation consists of a number of small self contained hostels. The quality of this accommodation ranges from outstanding to adequate. Major work planned for May 2014 will ensure all hostels are of a good or outstanding quality. All accommodation is well equipped to meet the needs of students. Students and parents on the whole express a good degree of satisfaction with the standard of the accommodation believing it to provide the necessary facilities and equipment for their comfort. Wi Fi access was raised as an issue by students and parents and has already been identified by the college as an area for improvement. Action to address this is on-going. The grounds that surround the college are well maintained. They offer the students a safe environment in which to relax or pursue hobbies, interests and sporting activities.

Residential students are able to prepare or access healthy nutritious food. The canteen provides hot food choices at breakfast, lunch and dinner, with vegetarian options. All hostels have cooking facilities and there are regular trips that run from the college to a local supermarket.

Evening activities are planned to facilitate accessibility to all students. Activities are designed to encourage mixing of students from different courses and with different interests. Staff lead by example and foster positive attitudes towards others regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation. Based on feedback and requests from students the wardens organise a schedule of activities. These vary from sports events, academic workshops and practical sessions to trips to London and the German market in Birmingham. There is a club area that allows students to relax, watch TV or play games should they choose not to participate in the activities.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management are **good**.

The leadership and management of the residential provision is good. Students receive an individual service, which is designed to meet their personal needs. On the whole parents are positive about the quality of care delivered. They describe the warden team as 'excellent', 'reassuring', 'approachable', 'they are parents to the students'. Wardens have good knowledge of, and relationships with, students.

Students state that a key strength of this college is the warden team. They are a small dedicated team who are professional and enthusiastic about their role. Staff have access to good quality training. They are provided with regularly reviewed policies, procedures and guidance that promote safeguarding, corporate parenting and student contribution. Staff sensitively address individuals' needs, effectively nurture and develop students' independence and foster a cohesive sense of community. They regularly review practice and systems to ensure the service they deliver continues to improve and meet students' needs.

As a result of this continual review, and good partnership work with parents and other professionals, students develop into mature young adults. Staffing arrangements are well organised. They are flexible and are adapted to meet the changing needs of the students or to meet the requests of students after consultation. For example, to facilitate a trip requested through a hostel meeting.

Staff feel well supported by the college and senior managers. They have daily handovers, regular meetings and an annual appraisal and performance review. The review identifies individuals' aims and objectives and training needs; this then feeds into the college development plan. The college does not keep a written record of staff support and supervision. Therefore, there is no record of the progress of staff throughout the year to ensure continuing good quality performance between the appraisal and the performance review.

The college's management team and board of governors have excellent insight into the residential provision's strengths and areas for development. The residential provision's self assessment is comprehensive and feeds into a detailed development plan. The college's management team continue to invest in the service and provisions to ensure standards remain high.

There are a range of quality assurance systems, which involve staff, parents and students. These continue to be developed and new systems introduced. The residential management team ensure proper scrutiny of students' pastoral care. Any shortfalls in these areas are identified and addressed.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding arrangements are **good**

Good safeguarding is at the forefront of practice at the college. The college has a proactive relationship with the local authority. Two members of the residential team have been trained by the local authority to deliver safeguarding training across the

county to a range of agencies. They also sit on two of the local authority's safeguarding board's sub-committees. The college's safeguarding team meet on a regular basis. They ensure policies, procedures, staff practice and training continues to be reviewed and developed in line with societal trends and behaviours, changes to legislation and the needs of the student group. This ensures their changing needs continue to be met.

Students are protected from harm by good arrangements for personal safety and security. Security of hostels and the college site continues to be monitored and systems updated. Students' privacy and confidentiality is respected. Residential living arrangements ensure students can find privacy away from others if they wish. All students have taken part in a safeguarding survey. The analysis of this is used to raise action points which result in improved standards. For example, additional lighting in the college grounds.

Students and staff feel safe. All staff have regular training that covers all safeguarding and welfare issues. In addition, key staff receive additional training relevant to their role. For example, wardens have recently attended training on self-harm. This ensures staff are equipped to support students when welfare concerns arise.

Staff are effective at assessing and reducing risk. They recognise the importance of enabling students to take controlled risks in a safe nurturing environment. As a result students learn how to keep themselves safe in preparation for independence. They take responsibility for their actions and the impact of their actions on others. Students know and understand the college rules. They know wardens will actively enforce the rules to ensure their safety. The wardens have good partnership arrangements with parents and will involve them where appropriate to support students achieve positive change.

Staff work hard to protect students from the impact of bullying, anti-social or intimidating behaviour. Students are clear about their right to feel safe from this. Staff are sensitive and attuned to individual needs. Good staffing levels, vigilance and working practices adopted by the college reduce opportunities for bullying to occur. For example, staff work with students to develop their understanding of the diversity of their community and the importance of tolerance of others.

The college encourages positive behaviour. This expectation is highlighted at interview, during induction and reinforced throughout the year. Wardens have positive relationships with students. Open and honest discussion is valued as a way to address minor matters. Parents' involvement is also used to ensure students stay focused and on the right track.

Students are further protected by a robust staff recruitment process. Students also learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they regularly practise the emergency escape drill and staff receive fire safety training. Safe procedures are in place to protect students through tests on fire systems and other electrical equipment at appropriate intervals. Environmental risk assessments are in place to

ensure the college is fully informed about potential hazards to reduce risks.

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.