

Boston College

Inspection report for further education college

Unique reference number	SC055672
Inspection date	04/03/2014
Inspector	Christy Wannop
Type of inspection	Full

Setting address	Boston College, Skirbeck Road, BOSTON, Lincolnshire, PE21 6JF
Telephone number	01205 365 701
Email	

© Crown copyright 2014

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Information about the college

Boston Further Education College is situated close to the town centre of Boston on the east coast of Lincolnshire. There are four college sites, but all residential learners live, or are linked to the main site at Skirbeck Road, where the Accommodations Office is based. The college offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses to degree level.

The college has approximately 1700 full-time learners. There are 67 residential learners, 56 of whom are under 18. Learners choose to live in halls or stay with local 'homestay' families, approved by the college. Currently 18 learners live with 'homestay' families and 38 live in halls of residence. The majority are international learners from Europe and Asia who are studying A levels, although there are a very small number of local learners in halls of residence. The college was last inspected in October 2011.

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 provision is good. Residential learners do well at college and they have a very positive experience. Students, families and agencies are very satisfied with the response from the accommodation officer and international office team. The quality of welfare support by the college's health and well-being team is excellent. Safeguarding at the college is good. Residential learners are safe and have a range of trusted, skilled adults who sort out any issues or provide more specialised support to meet their needs. The homestay provision with local families is strong. These families take their responsibility to care very seriously, and are fundamental to the positive international experience. Learners have a clear voice across the college, and respect for difference and diversity is central to the college's practice. Management is calm, efficient and effective in taking action to improve the provision.

There are a few minor weaknesses in parts of two national minimum standards, but these do not detract from the overall quality of care and welfare provision, or the experience of learners. These relate to extending first aid cover at all times of the day, and ensuring the college's records of recruitment checks are complete. There are four additional points for further improvement to enrich the quality of the provision.

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 a member of staff holding a current first aid qualification is available to students at all times on college sites (NMS 29.4)
- ensure the college's system for recruiting staff (including ancillary staff, contract/sessional staff and volunteers) who will work with students under eighteen, includes all elements of NMS 34.2, which can be verified from recruitment records (NMS 34.2)
- strengthen the staff welfare presence after the college day in order to provide a broad range of interesting extra-curricular or leisure activities for residential learners' personal development and fulfilment (good practice recommendation for further development)
- consider how the accommodation and international service can reflect the impact that residence has on the social and learning outcomes for international students (good practice recommendation for further development)
- consider how to capture the contribution made by security officer staff to the overall residential provision (good practice recommendation for further development)
- strengthen consistency in behaviour management by ensuring one system that takes account of domestic issues for housekeeping staff (good practice recommendation for further development)

Outcomes for young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Outcomes for residential learners are good. Residential learners were extremely positive about their very different experience of living away from home. They say they 'feel fine at college'. They have made an active choice to attend the college and the type of residential accommodation and experience they want, based on their own and family preference and ability to live independently. They like being self-reliant in residential halls and those in homestay really appreciate the family-care experience.

Relationships in halls of residence are generally very good and residential learners take the lead in resolving issues when they occur. They describe a community, regardless of country of origin, religion or ethnicity. One described halls as, 'like a big, big family'. Behaviour is generally good and residential learners make the most of informal opportunities to gather as a group. In homestays, young people develop new friends and make strong bonds with families that, in some cases, extend long after their time in Britain has ended. One residential learner described it as, 'really nice and supportive'.

They learn about British culture, both at the college and when they join local leisure groups. Residential learners have joined ballet classes, rugby clubs and Scottish country dancing in the local community. They can join English conversation clubs at a local church. They have good information, advice and support to take care of their health and are keen to be active, though some continue to smoke and also choose to drink alcohol. Some join local health clubs and many make use of the free swimming nearby. Residential learners join in whole college events to give back to the community, raising funds for Comic Relief, Children in Need, and the college's own, 'Be Brilliant' foundation.

Residential learners study hard and achieve A level success, going on to pre-university courses at the college or progressing to British, or their home, universities. They develop new learning and study skills, as well as valuable social skills and confidence as they learn to take care of themselves. One residential learner is a student mentor on a new pilot scheme aiming to give opportunities for responsibility and provide formal peer support. For many it is the first time away from home. They develop independence, learn to shop and cook, do their laundry and clean up after themselves. They see their time at the college as a valuable preparation for life at university. They have a good voice in college and become representatives on whole college decision-making forums. One said they had learnt critical thinking skills and had, 'a better opportunity to develop and be independent, get ready for uni'. They are ambitious for the next stage in their lives.

Quality of service

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

The quality of the residential provision is good. Residential learners have good support in the absence of their parents because staff have good relationships, communicate swiftly and work in partnership across the college and with parents. They say they are very satisfied and have a responsive service to any issue. Residential learners who are vulnerable because of emotional, physical or mental health issues benefit from the excellent health and well-being team based in college during the day. This team coordinates well with accommodation, international office staff and academic tutors to provide an effective welfare net that supports achievement in college. Cause for concern, academic and safeguarding meetings are forums to share welfare and educational issues and plan a coordinated college response. Residential learners all knew how and why they could contact the team. This means that every residential learner routinely has access to national health services, but also ensures the most vulnerable or challenging residential learners are guided to the support they need from the college's own professional health advisors, learning support and counsellors. For example, students at risk from drug taking, eating disorders, or depression are quickly spotted and referred for help or are signposted to specialist services.

While first aid cover is available during the day, the college does not meet the national minimal standard (NMS) to have a qualified first aider on duty after 10pm. However, the live-in warden has dealt promptly and safely with any medical crisis that occurs after the college day. Residential learners say they are well looked after at the college if they do not feel well. They are confident in the availability of staff around the clock to help them if they need it and have contact numbers and know where the warden lives. Residential learners speak highly of particular staff working for the college and how the introductions to each other by the Accommodations Officer helped to break the ice and break down any barriers because of difference due to language, culture, religion or nationality. One residential learner described this as feeling 'connected'.

Accommodation on site is of a good quality, quite recently built and is very convenient to the main college building. There are currently 11 self-contained flats in adjoining buildings in use, accommodating between two and ten residential learners in each. The small kitchen and bathrooms are shared, though everyone has a sink in their bedroom. Residential students have a range of options for family contact. Skype, internet and mobile telephone contact are freely available to facilitate communication. Rooms are equipped for study and have Ethernet internet connection. There is a communal common room, shared by all. The college plans to refresh this area with some new equipment, but there are: games console areas; a flat screen TV; a piano; seating areas; and a table tennis table. Many residential students prefer to gather in each other's flats, despite lack of communal space there. There is little outdoor leisure space at the college, and no on-site sports facilities, though the college plans to turn part of its grounds into a recreational space for learners, with outdoor exercise equipment and games.

Residential learners make their own activities on the whole. The college does not have an active, or planned, social input after college hours and there are few facilities on site for this. The college does arrange trips to local attractions or to

nearby cities for shopping and exploration several times a term, but there are no staff-led organised activities on site at the end of the day, or at weekends and there are few facilities for this. The college is clear that this is part of the independent residential learner experience learning and signposts them regularly to community activities. However, some residential learners have suggested staff-led activities, such as a film club, sharing time with local day learners, as a means of improving language skills and friendships. Some say they want more opportunities for sports close to, or at, the college campus. The college has missed an opportunity to enrich the free time of residential learners with adult-led activities to enhance language and social and cultural opportunities.

The college provides a wide range of eating options during the college day. Food is tasty, nutritious and hygienically prepared and the catering team is able, if needed, to cater for specialist diets, whether on health or religious grounds. Residential learners in halls of residence are generally self-reliant and cook for themselves in the evening, with varying degrees of skill and success. Homestay families provide an evening meal if this is part of the package requested and residential learners find this a real positive part of their time in Britain. They enjoy social mealtimes and tasting new foods, sharing opportunities for discussion and language games at dinner. One residential learner said, 'the cooking is more than good.'

Leadership and management

The leadership and management are **good**.

Leadership and management of the residential provision are good. Efficient, well-organised management systems bring together the accommodation officer, international department staff and cross-college managers. This results in a positive experience for residential learners. Parents and placing overseas agencies report good communication and are also confident in the care and education provided. A parent described the 'love, care, support and assistance' for their child. An agency described the international and accommodation staff as, 'reliable, trustworthy and a professional partner with your heart in the right place'.

The aims of the residential provision are made clear in documents and also on the college's website. Records, policies and procedures support a coordinated welfare and educational experience for residential learners. Information is accessible to all, translated into key languages. Parents are welcomed at the college too. They tell the accommodation officer: 'You always handle them with care and much sense for the situation and that you are open to anything.'

Staffing in residential time is minimal and the college is clear that these arrangements support the independence agenda for residential learners. There is an active presence from the contracted security team, one of whom is on duty and patrols evenings and weekends to ensure safety and engage positively with residential learners. An on-site warden lives in accommodation adjacent to the halls of residence. She works full time as a member of the health and well-being team and is on call outside the college day and at weekends. She acts as a good link between

residential, learning and welfare support. Residential learners say they like the support and care they have from the security officer during the evenings, 'the best person ever, kind of a friend'. A team of housekeepers keep the halls of residence clean and encourage residential learners to take responsibility for their own space. They too provide positive adult role models for residential learners. One housekeeper described her relationships to them: 'Mum to some, auntie to some, nan to some.' The atmosphere in the halls of residence is calm and friendly.

Residential learners in homestay share family life in a range of different family homes and form strong relationships with their hosts, who give good practical support so they can acclimatise to their new community. A residential learner said: 'They give me the feeling that I am part of the family.' Premises and people are all checked for safety and suitability. Host families have safeguarding training and good information and access to 24-hour on-call support from the accommodation officer. They describe her as, 'very on the ball' and report that she carries out a regular process of checking with both families and residential learners to ensure arrangements are safe, harmonious and problem-free. Permanently employed college staff benefit from a range of training relating to their roles, and the college is swift to arrange input in response to learners' changing needs. A system of one-to-one meetings and annual appraisal ensures good professional accountability and development for college staff. Contract security staff, because of individual personality, play a significant and positive role with residential learners in the evenings and at weekends, yet are not part of the formal welfare staffing arrangements. They do, however, receive informal support and share in safeguarding training.

There is a well-established system of quality review embedded within whole college evaluation and progression. However, there is no formal reflection or reporting about the impact of the residential experience on the social and learning outcomes for international students. The college has, however, driven improvements in the range of learning support available for residential learners, including meeting previous recommendations for staff training. They have increased the opportunities and forums for learners, including overseas learners, to have a respected voice in what happens at the college. There is a particularly strong emphasis on respect and valuing difference. The college promotes an unequivocal anti-discriminatory message and learners have been central in creating the art work about this, prominently displayed throughout. Residential learners mix with others from many different countries and feel part of a community within residence.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding arrangements are **good**

The college's arrangements for ensuring that residential learners aged under 18 are safe and protected from harm are good. Buildings, environment and activities are safe because the college's health and safety arrangements and regular risk assessment and review are effective. Residential learners say they feel safe and know where to get advice or help in an emergency. The college uses established safer recruitment procedures to ensure that all directly employed staff are safe to

work with children and young people. No adult works with children without a current disclosure and barring service (DBS) check. However, the college does not ask referees whether applicants are suitable to work with young people, or make direct contact to verify the reference. There is a system to ensure that contracted staff are safely recruited by their agency, including a check with the disclosure and barring service but the college does not have a record of the full checks as required by the NMS.

Staff are alert to any bullying or oppressive behaviour. Residential learners say they do not experience bullying or prejudice. Behaviour is generally well managed through an effective system of sanctions, and residential learners are clear about the expectations of positive behaviour. They do report some inconsistencies when staff respond outside of the policy, for example, when staff implement different penalties for young people's poor housekeeping. The college is aware of these issues and plans a more consistent approach.

The college makes good arrangements for safeguarding and child protection. Policy, procedure and training ensure that staff at all levels know what to do in the event that a residential learner is at risk. The safety and protection of children are embedded in all aspects of health and well-being provision. A team meets regularly to ensure response, follow up and resolution of all concerns and referrals so that any young person in distress gets the care they need. Young people do not go missing from college. They are free to visit friends and explore locally or farther afield, keeping the warden informed if they go away overnight. All adults in contact with residential learners understand and act within a clear protective framework that keeps residential learners safe.

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.