

Easton & Otley College

Inspection report for further education college

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas / Loleta Rascagneres
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Information about the college

Easton and Otley College is a land-based further education college situated in a rural area close to the city of Norwich. The college offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses.

This is the college’s first inspection of the residential provision since a merger took place in 2012 between Easton and Otley colleges. The college currently caters for 122 residential students, the majority of whom are under the age of 18. On-site residential provision only is offered by the college

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	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

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

The overall effectiveness of the residential provision for this college is good. All of the national minimum standards have been fully met. Three good practice recommendations have been made. These refer to the system for complaints from learners, communication between residential learners and staff, and staff training with regards to physical intervention.

This service provides residential learners with invaluable and positive life experiences, ensuring they are well prepared for future employment or higher education. The college provides residential learners with a good level of individual support, both academically and pastorally. Consequently, the college has a high success rate for attendance and achievement for residential learners compared to their peers using the day provision.

The college has outstanding safeguarding practices. Safeguarding is at the heart of all practice in the college, and residential learners fully understand their role in ensuring their own and others' safety. The college is diligent in managing all levels of concern for all age groups. Residential learners are accommodated safely.

Residential learners and their parents mostly speak positively about the residential experience. They say they have made good progress in terms of their independence and maturity. They feel safe as staff treat them with respect. Residential learners say that the wardens are like part of their family as they 'look out for them'. Parents and residential learners have mixed views about the quality of the food and residential 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 residential learners have a good understanding of residential practices such as the availability of meals and 'curfew' (Good practice recommendation)
- improve the quality of responses to complaints made by residential learners: ensure the process for complaints is user-friendly; responses recognise the efforts of residential learners in raising their concerns by acknowledging complaints through the formal complaints procedure and making it explicit how the college and learners can work together to resolve issues (Good practice recommendation)
- give consideration to residential staff receiving training in physical intervention as per the Student Discipline Policy. (Good practice recommendation)

Outcomes for young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Outcomes for residential learners are good at this college. Residential learners feel relaxed and safe in the residential provision. They enjoy their residential experience. They enjoy the close friendships they make and the strong bond they have with residential staff. They recognise the benefits of being able to access the residential provision. Some said they would not be able to access their course without being able to stay at the college. Residential learners have good attendance and achievement is high. Their attendance and achievement are higher than their college

peers who do not stay in residence.

Residential learners are actively encouraged to take an interest in looking after their health and leading healthy lives. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle is successfully integrated into how the college operates. They are educated on how to live a healthy lifestyle through enrichment sessions that cover healthy eating, exercise, sexual health as well as drug and alcohol awareness.

Residential learners are actively encouraged to contribute to the running of the residential provision. Their views and opinions are valued, which provides social cohesion and a strong college identity. Residential learners are actively involved in the running of the residential provision and any developments or changes to residential life. For example, they are asked their views on the student welcome pack as well as the induction process.

Residential learners say they have made good progress in terms of their independence and maturity. For example, they are responsible for ensuring their room key is left on-site when they leave the college. This not only safeguards the young person but also helps them to take responsibility for themselves. A parent said, 'There is enough discipline so they feel safe but also enough freedom to enable them to grow up.'

Quality of service

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

The quality of the service for the residential learners is good. Residential learners have strong relationships with each other and the welfare team. They talk about the staff as being part of their family. Staff also reflect this sentiment: 'We are a family and we look out for the students as though part of our family.' Residential learners feel able to go to staff with any problems or concerns they have. Caseload working enables staff to get to know residential learners individually. Furthermore, residential learners have a point of contact if they have any issues.

Residential learners have a good induction into residential and college life. Parents are welcomed as part of this induction and invited for a barbeque with their sons and daughters on the first evening. Previously, residential staff have also invited parents to stay on into the evening to join in activities. However, residential learners suggested that an improvement to induction would be if parents were asked to leave before the activities started to enable learners to join in the activities and start the process of making new friends. This is planned for the next induction, demonstrating that the learner voice is valued.

Residential learners say they feel able and safe to raise any concerns they have. They know how to make a complaint and have done so. However, the quality of the response to residential learners could be improved. It does not make it explicit how the college and residential learners can work together to resolve issues. Written complaints are not always on a formal complaint form and therefore not always

treated as a formal complaint in accordance with the college's policy. The complaint form itself is process driven and not user-friendly.

Residential learners have good arrangements in place for healthcare. This includes good emotional support through the college counsellor should they require this service. However, residential learners said they felt more comfortable talking to the welfare team but knew they could access the counsellor should they wish to. Residential learners are encouraged and supported to register with the local doctor's surgery but can also use the local walk-in centre and accident and emergency facilities if required. Residential learners who have medication are provided with a safe and secure means of storing their medication.

Residential learners have mixed views about the quality, quantity and timing of the meals. They all agree meals at lunchtime are very good. The catering provision provides a flexible service to ensure it meets the needs of all residential learners, including those that are out early or back late. Residential learners can go up for second helpings and they are included in discussions about their likes and dislikes, which are reflected in the menus. Nevertheless, residential learners continue to have a lack of knowledge about the catering provision that is offered to them. For example, residential learners are not aware they can ask for a 'bacon butty' prior to the kitchen opening for breakfast in the morning if they need to leave early. Similarly, residential learners have been involved in discussions about what the rules around 'curfew' should be but continue to be confused about these.

The college provides good opportunities for equality, diversity and inclusion. Residential learners report that they accept difference and gave examples of students who have a different sexual orientation to themselves as being treated with respect and dignity.

Residential learners enjoy a good range of activities. They go on trips out within the local area, such as, go-karting, paintballing and trips into Norwich as well as having on-site activities such as football and movie nights. They have access to good resources such as computers and a library.

Residential learners are accommodated in single study bedrooms, some of which are en-suite. They say they like their rooms and are afforded enough privacy. They have access to a number of communal areas including a common room and a prayer/reflection room. The accommodation is generally to a good standard. The accommodation is clearly segregated between age and gender and there are suitable security arrangements in place. Residential learners report that maintenance issues are quickly resolved.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management are **good**.

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. Residential learners receive an individual service, which is designed to meet their personal

needs. All staff have a good knowledge of the learners they are working with, ensuring their health and welfare needs are consistently met. Staff ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred on meeting the individual needs and aspirations of each residential learner.

There are sufficient skilled residential staff who are proactive in identifying and addressing learners' welfare needs. Staff receive a good induction and a prolonged probation period. This includes a monthly meeting with a senior member of staff to discuss their progress for their first nine months. This ensures staff are sufficiently prepared for their role. Currently, staff receive an annual appraisal with a six-month review after their probation period. This is changing in the new academic year when staff will receive more frequent formal support. Nevertheless, staff say they feel very well supported by each other and senior managers.

Residential learners benefit from the support of a small but professional and competent staff team who are highly motivated and enthusiastic. Staff have access to good policies, procedures and guidance that promote the strong values and ethos of the service. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

All staff are aware of their responsibilities for promoting a highly inclusive culture which recognises the value of staff and learners. Staff have a good understanding of the differing needs of the learner group and are flexible in adapting the delivery of services to meet those needs. For example, assessments are completed to ensure all learners receive any additional support they require. This may be in-class support, a scribe, reader or extra time to complete work.

This positive and enabling staff team has developed mutually respectful relationships with learners. They support them to understand and address their emotions and how these affect their behaviour and interaction with others. Staff effectively share information with each other so they can provide continuity of care and have an awareness of learners' current circumstances. Staff receive training in equality and diversity, and the college runs inclusive events such as sign language classes. Furthermore, Bollywood dancers and HateFree Norfolk have also visited the college to provide learners with a range of cultural perspectives.

The college has strong monitoring systems in place for the residential provision. Continuous self-assessment is a fair and accurate reflection. Equality, diversity and inclusion are impressive and present at every level of college life. The residential provision, although comparatively small to the rest of the college, is prominent within the college. Plans for the residential provision are clearly set out and explicitly expressed.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding arrangements are **outstanding**

The safety of students at this college is outstanding. Safeguarding practice is at the

heart of the college and is given the highest priority. Staff have a comprehensive knowledge of the in-depth safeguarding policy and know how to report safeguarding concerns. This includes a clear understanding of the whistleblowing procedures. Staff say that students are their priority. The college have designated safeguarding officers who take responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns. Designated safeguarding officers have all been trained to the appropriate level and are known by staff. A comprehensive weekly report ensures senior managers and governors have a good understanding of all safeguarding concerns within the college and the action being taken.

Residential learners do not report bullying as an issue. Any issues of bullying or discrimination are taken seriously and addressed immediately and sensitively. Staff implement appropriate risk assessments which identify risk and measures to minimise risk. Examples include cases of self-harm and those learners who may experience illnesses such as bulimia or anorexia.

Staff consistently implement positive behaviour strategies to support residential learners to respect and understand differences and to appropriately manage conflicts. Behaviour of residential learners is generally very good. They understand the rules and appreciate the need for them. They understand the disciplinary procedures and say these are implemented fairly. The student discipline policy and procedures are comprehensive and robust. However, the policy talks about staff holding students. Most staff do not have the need to restrain or hold students and those that have are fully trained. Furthermore, restraint is seen as a very last resort. However, residential staff are not trained in physical intervention. This may be useful to them as this particular type of training usually offers de-escalation techniques as well as how to hold young people safely.

The procedures for safe recruitment of staff and volunteers are excellent, effective and robust. This includes a process for verification of references. In cases where staff commence employment prior to all checks being received, a vigorous risk assessment is carried out. The line manager is provided with information setting out clearly the need for close supervision and that staff should under no circumstances be left unsupervised. Additionally, staff are asked to complete a form annually to provide the college with information about any convictions staff may have incurred over the previous year. This demonstrates the college's high regard towards the honesty and integrity of its workforce.

There is a clear health and safety policy in place and effective action is taken to minimise risks. There are good systems in place to ensure effective risk assessment of all on and off-site activities that residential learners take part in. High-risk activities such as clay pigeon shoots take place at an appropriate venue specific for the activity. The college completes their own risk assessments and ensures the venue also has appropriate risk assessments in place.

The college takes effective action to eliminate or minimise the risk of fire. This includes robust risk assessment of all areas, appropriate checks of electrical equipment, fire escape routes and fire fighting equipment. Residential learners have

the opportunity to practice evacuating the building upon hearing the fire alarm sound.

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.