

Plumpton College

Further Education College residential provision

Inspection dates		8 March to 10 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding
Quality of service		Outstanding
Safeguarding		Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding

Summary of key findings

This college is outstanding because:

- The college's inclusive policy for admissions offers a unique opportunity for learning across a broad catchment area. Students make significant progress. Additionally, they gain confidence, maturity, self-esteem and close friendships.
- Individual support for students is exemplary. All staff, from the Principal to domestic staff, are committed to providing a bespoke supportive service enabling students to succeed in their studies.
- The college has a strong safeguarding ethos, which means that students feel safe and secure. Students say that the rules and expectations of the college are fair and reasonable. There is a robust and consistent response to poor and risky behaviour. College staff work closely together to ensure that students receive appropriate support. There are highly effective relationships with external professionals.
- The staff team has a wealth of knowledge and experience supported by regular guidance, training and support. They provide a high-quality service where the ethos is centred on meeting the individual needs and aspirations of each student.
- The senior management team fully understands the strengths and weaknesses of the college, and has robust plans to address shortfalls. Shortfalls identified at this inspection were swiftly and effectively acted upon.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Complete a risk assessment for the security of windows in the residential hostels.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
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- Outcomes for students are outstanding, because they make significant progress in their academic and vocational studies from their starting points, compared to their non-resident peers and students in other local colleges. The college's inclusive policy for admissions offers a unique opportunity for learning for students from a broad catchment area.
- Confidence, self-esteem and independence skills are well developed as the young people progress through their course. One said that the best things about being in residence are: 'It is homely, the social atmosphere and it gives us confidence.' They are well supported by staff, and staff work in partnership with parents.
- Students feel settled and secure. They have a strong affiliation to the residential provision, saying that it is like a family. One parent said: 'He loves it, it's a dream come true.' Young people enjoy the residential experience. One said: 'Great year, lots of laughter and fun. Lots of good bits, especially meeting other young farmer groups. Can't fault it.'
- Students engage in their courses. This leads to a high success rate and good employability. Good prospects of employment act as a source of motivation and engagement. Students also go onto higher education.
- The student voice is valued, and changes are made after listening to students. For example, there have been changes to the menu. The catering manager said: 'The menu has improved as the year has gone on as a result of listening to students.'
- Students have good access to primary healthcare and counselling facilities. They register with the local general practitioner, where they have access to an allocated appointment system. This enables them to be seen quickly. Students can access a sexual health clinic at the surgery as well as discuss with their tutors.
- Young people feel valued and show respect for one another. A sense of community fosters this mutual respect. There are effective buddying and mentoring systems, which enable friendships to blossom and increase confidence. No form of discrimination or bullying is tolerated.

Quality of service

Outstanding

- The quality of service is outstanding, because individual support for students is exemplary. For example, wardens will meet students from the bus during their first term if they are anxious about coming to the college. They will continue until students tell them this service is no longer necessary. A parent said in a 'thank you' card to the residential staff: 'Today, as a family, we are proud to attend prize-giving with her. This has been made possible because you made the difference and without your time and support she wouldn't have stayed at college during those difficult early weeks in September.' Pastoral arrangements are well planned and managed. Staff have strong relationships with students. A student referred to the residential team as: 'excellent, always there. We can go to them with anything.' Another said: 'They are like our second parents.'
- The assessment process on admission gives a clear indicator of academic capacity and ensures that the right support is provided. The induction process is bespoke, providing students with a clear understanding of behavioural and academic expectations, as well as opportunities to form friendship groups. Students settle into the residential provision quickly.
- Staff know and understand the students really well. They provide a practical, nurturing and committed response to meet their individual needs to ensure that they successfully complete their studies. Established effective communication between academic and residential staff enables a seamless exchange of information. Furthermore, parents report good levels of contact with staff. One parent said: 'They always tell me what's going on.' Good, effective planning and review ensures that students develop within a safe and contained environment. For example, as confidence and self-esteem grow, support is gradually reduced, which enables further growth and development.
- The flexibility offered by the residential provision ensures that students can complete the requirements of their vocational courses, such as milking and equine duties. They learn transferrable skills such as work ethics and commitment, which enables them to maintain employment at the weekends and gives them financial stability.
- Students enjoy a wide range of activities such as the young farmers club, charitable events and sports. This encourages social and personal development.
- Staff are proactive and well-informed in seeking to meet the needs of students. They provide child-centred, strong advocacy. Domestic staff engage students informally, which provides a further means of support.
- The organisation of residential provision seeks to safeguard young people's welfare. Students are accommodated in single gender, under-18 hostels. Students mostly have single study bedrooms, although some rooms are shared. Some accommodation has been recently refurbished to a high standard and there is an ongoing programme of investment. Students like their residential accommodation. They feel safe. Incidents of home sickness are minimal, but well supported.

Safeguarding

Outstanding

- Safeguarding is outstanding, because there is a strong safeguarding ethos within the college. Students say that they feel safe and secure. One said: 'I have an overall feeling of safety and security while living in.' Students feel safe due to trusting relationships with key adults. Staff use their experience to anticipate any areas of concern and risk.
- There are highly effective relationships with external professionals such as the police and the local multi-agency safeguarding hub. Positive relationships with the police are supported by good and prompt exchange of information, resulting in swift and effective action to protect students. Safeguarding records provide detailed accounts of how students are protected. This ensures a coordinated consistent response from all staff.
- Staff have a broad understanding of the range of issues that affect students, for example anxiety, bullying and self-harm. Their understanding of current safeguarding concerns is strengthened through training and guidance in issues such as radicalisation and cyberbullying.
- Students feel secure in the college's rules, and find them fair and reasonable. Staff take a swift, appropriate and consistent approach to breaches of college rules. For example, where student attendance falls below the required level. Discipline is fair and proportionate.
- College staff work collaboratively to minimise incidents of bullying, racism, alcohol and drug misuse. They encourage students to manage their own behaviour to develop their maturity. This also encourages a sense of community and shared ownership.
- Vetting procedures are reasonable. Adults have appropriate checks completed, which helps to protect students from unsuitable influences. In one case, a reference from an agency was lacking in depth. Staff acted swiftly to improve practice in this area and obtained a more appropriate reference.
- There is a strong approach to fire safety. Students know how to evacuate the buildings. Fire safety checks and risk management are good. The monitoring of accidents contributes to further training in identified hazardous areas to minimise risk to students.
- Security arrangements have been improved and include CCTV and swipe card-activated doors. This means that student access to hostels is limited and staff know when they are in their hostel. However, a risk assessment has not been completed for the security of windows. The college has acted swiftly in organising a multi-agency review of security arrangements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. There is a calm sense of authority which is motivating and engaging. A strong link between the senior management team and the residential team enables robust and effective care for individual students.
- There is a longstanding and cohesive residential team, members of which know and understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. The team has a wealth of knowledge and experience, supported by regular guidance, training and support. It provides a high-quality service where the ethos is centred on meeting the individual needs and aspirations of each student.
- Managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the residential provision. There is an excellent development plan which seeks to maintain the ethos of the college and expand the residential provision slowly and progressively. An additional layer of management is planned to enrich the residential experience.
- Monitoring is supported by daily updates and weekly meetings between residential staff and senior managers. Senior managers are knowledgeable and insightful about the specific needs of the students.

College details

Type of college	Further Education College, residential provision
Age range of learners	16 to 18
Approximate number of learners in residence	223
Principal/CEO	Jeremy Kerswell
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2013
Website address	www.plumpton.ac.uk

Purpose and scope of 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.

Contextual information

This is a further education college situated on the South Downs in East Sussex. The college offers a diverse range of land-based courses from agriculture, equine and wine science to outdoor education, with a main focus on integrating theory with practical skill development. The college also encompasses an 800-hectare commercial farm. The college can accommodate up to approximately 203 students. Around 70 were under 18 years of age at the time of the inspection. The college does not arrange lodgings with host families.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Joanne Vyas SCRI
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Joanne Vyas, Social Care Regulatory Inspector (SCRI), carried out the inspection at short notice. She took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers. These views are reflected throughout the report.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the 'Evaluation schedule for inspection of residential provision in further education colleges 2014':

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/evaluation-schedule-for-inspection-of-residential-provision-further-education-colleges>

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