

Priory College Swindon

105 Bath Road, Swindon SN1 4AX

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Priory College Swindon is a further education college. The college is part of the Priory Group and Priory Education Services, providing specialist post-16 provision for students who have social and communication difficulties, particularly autistic spectrum conditions. Some students have moderate learning disabilities and some have mental health problems. Some students are expected to go on to university to study at degree level while many are supported into gainful employment. There are a range of options for learning, such as through the partnership with local further education colleges, in-house tuition and an independent living skills programme. The college offers therapeutic support alongside education and aims to meet the needs of students who have differing levels of cognitive ability.

The college admits both day and residential students. At the time of inspection, 19 of the 31 students were residential and two were under the age of 18 years. The residential accommodation is located on three sites in the local community. The largest property generally accommodates first-year students, for whom there are higher levels of staff supervision. Residential students are both under and over 18 years of age and of mixed gender.

Inspection dates 18 to 20 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account **Good**

How well young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

The college provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Date of last inspection: 26 February 2014

Key findings from this inspection

This college is good because:

- The adults working across this provision have high aspirations for the students. They support students to achieve their full potential, and they remain dogmatic in their approach to ensuring inclusion and equal opportunity for all those who attend this college.
- Education and support are provided after careful assessment and consultation with students, parents and professional stakeholders.
- The college works effectively with external agencies, including mainstream further education providers. Working together, they provide bespoke holistic packages of education, care and support, and opportunities which maximise student development.
- Leaders and managers have the confidence and trust of parents, students and professional stakeholders. They are described as 'available, approachable and quick to address any issues'.
- Students reported that they are happy at the college. They feel safe and have trusted adults around them whom they can turn to, especially if they have any concerns.
- Risk, choice and responsibility are carefully considered. Students are supported by staff to develop an understanding of risk and to make safe, considered choices as part of their growth towards independence.
- Links with employers are well established. Students have opportunities to experience work which is related to their skills, ability and interests. Many go on to be gainfully employed and continue to make a positive contribution to the communities they live in.

The college's areas for development:

- Supervision provided to care staff lacks focus on the experiences and plans of students. The frequency of supervision is insufficient to demonstrate effective support and challenge to care staff.
- Recruitment records lack sufficient detail to demonstrate consistently robust safer recruitment practice.
- Some areas of the residential provision lack a welcoming and homely feel.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: good

The carefully planned and implemented support offered to students is good. It meets their needs and contributes towards positive experiences and progress. Where possible, students are integrated into mainstream further education provision, and staff from the college support and enable attendance and achievement.

Meaningful and supportive relationships exist between staff and students. Relationships are further enhanced through work in partnership with other professionals. The college seeks specialist support, guidance and therapy where needed to progress students' health, education and psychological well-being.

Students feel listened to. Opportunities to express their views are readily available, and many attend weekly house meetings where collectively they raise concerns or request resources. Explanations are given when it is not possible to act immediately on students' wishes. There is a recurring issue about internet speed in one of the residential homes, which the college is acting to rectify. Most students' requests or concerns are otherwise fully addressed.

Students reported that they have made progress since attending this college. This is confirmed by professional stakeholders and through monitoring by the college. Alongside academic learning, students feel that they are being prepared for employment, further education and independence. Independence skills are encouraged, and students are supported to make choices and take age-appropriate risks, dependant on their understanding and ability. This is sometimes a very difficult balance of risk. For example, students do not always make consistently healthy food choices.

Students' achievements are celebrated by staff and parents. Some students are using public transport, going out without adult supervision and undertaking household tasks for the first time. They are provided with or supported to make nutritious meals. Some students progress to taking it in turns to cook meals for one another.

Several students said that they have become calmer and less anxious because of the support and guidance offered. Others commented that they feel more confident and independent.

Students have lots of opportunities to engage in activities in the college and student accommodation, as well as in the wider community. Students particularly enjoy visiting the cinema and local gyms, and spending time with friends. Students are supported to attend faith-based community activities if they wish. Activities are generally arranged around students' interests and skills. One student recently attended a lecture and had the confidence to ask questions of a famous historian. He also took part in a radio presentation during an international awareness day.

How well young people are helped and protected: good

Students feel safe and protected. There is a warm, friendly and mutually respectful relationship between students and staff. Students feel listened to and reported that they can share concerns with staff whom they trust.

Risk is carefully assessed, reviewed and managed. Students are enabled and encouraged to take age- and ability-appropriate risks. This advances their understanding of the world around them and of how to keep themselves safe, and develops their independence skills.

Staff respond effectively to issues which may put students at risk of harm. There are no reported incidents of students going missing from the college. Bullying and other social issues, such as radicalisation, are taken seriously. Action taken by staff has been effective in addressing issues before they become dangerous. This helps to keep students safe.

Behaviour is well managed. Boundaries and expectations are clear, and additional guidance and support are given to those who need them. Staff give careful consideration to which students live together. Generally, this avoids conflict and potential difficulties. All staff are trained in behaviour management techniques. The use of physical intervention to manage behaviour is kept to a minimum.

The college has developed and sustains careful links with outside agencies to support the care and protection of students. Links with the police and specialist support agencies have been used to address behaviour which puts students at risk.

Not all recruitment records comply with safer recruitment practice, although all contain the main checks, such as the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and identity checks. There have been recent improvements following the appointment of a new business manager.

Safeguarding of students is taken seriously in the college. All staff receive a high level of safeguarding training and know what to do in the event of any issues. Any allegations or suspicions of harm are shared with the appropriate agencies.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weakness of the college. Action plans for improvement are realistic and achievable. Recent management appointments and the improvement of partnership working within the college have seen a surge of new ideas and developments which benefit students.

The college achieves its aims and objectives of providing individualised care, education and support for students. Aspirations and expectations for students are high. Imaginative and inspired opportunities are provided for students to achieve and experience new things. They make a positive contribution to the college and the wider

community. Students are involved in charity events, the production of a college magazine and local radio shows.

There are carefully maintained links and regular communication between those providing for the students. Mainstream further education providers reported a partnership with the college that 'works well'. Comments also included, 'The support enables students to successfully attend and make ... academic progress alongside developing social and independence skills. The college [is] quick to respond to any concerns or issues which may affect learning or student welfare.'

Attention to promoting equality of access to opportunities is key to the success that students make in this college. All students are valued as unique individuals, and staff are quick to point out achievements and skills. Without exception, the inspector witnessed staff talking with and about students in a way which demonstrates respect, understanding and a genuine desire to provide the best possible care and support.

Care and support staff have received appropriate training to ensure that they are equipped to provide for the needs of students. The majority of care staff have a professional childcare qualification and others are working towards these. All staff have at least 10 days a year devoted to personal development and training sessions.

The frequency and content of supervision sessions provided to care staff lack the usual rigour applied to other aspects of the support for staff.

Some areas of the residential environment lack homely touches, and the appearance of one home from outside is less than welcoming. These issues detract from what is otherwise an appropriate, safe and well-maintained residential environment.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of young people. They watched how professional staff work with young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the college knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Further education college with residential accommodation details

Social care unique reference number: SC061362

Principal/CEO: Mr Martin Bentham

Inspectors

Janice Hawtin, social care inspector

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