

Askham Bryan College

Askham Bryan York YO23 3FR

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Askham Bryan College is a specialist land-based college with six centres across the north of England. The two residential campuses, which offer accommodation to 16- and 17-year-olds as well as over-18s, are in the villages of Askham Bryan and Newton Rigg. The on-site facilities include a wildlife and conservation park, equestrian centre, engineering workshops and farms.

The college offers students entry level courses, apprenticeships, and diplomas at different levels through to BSc degrees with honours. There is a large range of courses available, including agriculture, animal management, arboriculture, countryside and the environment, engineering, equine, horticulture, sport, and uniformed public services.

Inspection dates 28 to 30 January 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The college provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the college contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for young people.

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 18 March 2013

Key findings from this inspection

This college is outstanding because:

- Residential students benefit from attending the college of their choice and experiencing a range of extra-curricular work and study activities. The additional support that they receive leads to improved engagement and outcomes.
- Student participation is a strength. The students' views are channelled through a range of effective platforms, including the student council chaired by the chief executive officer.
- Comprehensive safeguarding practice ensures that students are protected from harm. Staff oversee their safety and well-being and students feel safe and secure.
- The principles of inclusion, equality and diversity are at the heart of college life.
- A dedicated careers team provides students with a range of employability-related skills.
- The leadership is exceptional, and staff work as a cohesive, motivated team, with the welfare and development of students at the heart of their practice.
- The college has strong established links with industry and employers and is involved in applied research projects, such as grassland trials.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

Residential students benefit greatly from living on a campus which adds to their college experience and has a big impact on their all-round development. They have vastly improved results, attendance and retention figures. The residential team members, who have high aspirations for students, provide extra out-of-hours support to help students achieve. Consequently, students become self-motivated and make sustained progress. They present as confident, polite, hardworking and respectful young people who have a clear idea about their future.

Students enjoy increased access to work experience. They help with early morning and evening duties at the equestrian centre or farm. Students said benefits also include them becoming more confident and independent through living away from home. They have stronger friendships and increased access to activities, which include the use of the library and group study evenings. One student said, 'I would have dropped out if I had not been in accommodation, as I struggle getting up. The wardens come looking for you if you are not in college.'

Students have many trusted adults they can seek help and advice from. Residential wardens and teaching staff work together to look out for the well-being of those under 18. This provides reassurances to parents that their children are being properly looked after. This is particularly important as many of the families live several miles away from the college. Students have good relationships with the approachable residential wardens, who provide high levels of support and supervision. One parent wrote, 'As my daughter was only 16 when she started, I was concerned about her living in. The safeguarding team were great if I had any issues or if my daughter was ill. They dealt with it immediately and have always been available and keen to help.'

The introduction of the careers and employability hub provides students with high-quality information, advice and guidance. This is delivered by specialist careers advisors. The college has received accreditation by a quality framework due to the integral support students receive in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals. The college runs pioneering continuing professional development (CPD) seminar days. These provide students with a multitude of opportunities to develop their life, communication and interpersonal skills. The use of the online system for recording achievements and progress is an innovative way for students to develop their personal statement. Consequently, college life increases students' employability.

Students have a plethora of opportunities to provide feedback about their college experience. Managers take students' views seriously and make sure they are listened to and considered. The employment of full-time student union representatives is testimony to this commitment. Managers are flexible in making changes to meet students' needs, such as opening a new food outlet in a different part of the campus, and putting more vegan and vegetarian options on the food menu. The highly developed student council

arrangements ensure that students' voices are considered as an integral part of the college's strategic and operational planning and service delivery.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

There is a strong safeguarding culture across the whole college. Students live on a welcoming, friendly and secure campus and said they feel safe. Managers ensure that the college's safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and thorough. Managers and staff all understand that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the ongoing safety and welfare of students. This extends to the students themselves, who look out for each other and will speak to staff if they have concerns about a peer.

There is a well-structured process of observation and welfare checks by the residential staff and manager. They get to know the students exceptionally well and are quick to spot any signs that a student may need extra help. When necessary, this includes monitoring pre-paid food cards to check what food or drink they are consuming and that they are eating well.

The staff's effective use of the central electronic recording system captures information across the whole campus. This makes sure intelligence from different sources is shared. The system provides managers with a complete and up-to-date picture of risks, deteriorating behaviour and the well-being of students. Managers look at emerging needs and trends at an early stage so prompt action can be taken to support students. Fitness-to-study interviews look at whether students need practical, emotional, and, at times, financial support. This helps students keep on track with their learning progress and contributes towards excellent outcomes.

As a result of their comprehensive monitoring, leaders and managers recognised that there has been a rise in students' experiencing mental health related problems. They have responded to this by employing a student well-being coordinator at each of their residential sites. Students now have immediate access to emotional support. This extends to weekly visits from external professionals, such as counsellors and the health nurse. This coordinated approach helps identify if students are at risk of harm or exploitation. Students benefit from improved emotional well-being while they are studying.

Student behaviour is exemplary. There are clear expectations about standards of behaviour, which students respect and follow. Consequently, the risks to students relating to offending, going missing, substance and alcohol misuse are minimal. If students are late returning to campus, staff manage these situations well. Students are supported to take responsibility for their actions and learn from their mistakes. Parents are reassured by the residential rules applied by the college and students are thoroughly protected.

Staff respect and value the individuality and diversity of students. This promotes tolerance and understanding of each other. There has been a strong, focused and innovative approach to training in equality, diversity and inclusion. The college was

recently selected to appear on a national television programme to showcase its work on the promotion of women in the farming industry. Inclusivity is at the core of the college's learning experience.

Careful recruitment processes help to ensure the suitability of people working at the college. The designated safeguarding lead takes robust action to ensure that there are appropriate referrals to partner agencies when there are concerns about staff practice. Managers ensure that these are rigorously investigated, with collaborative working with the local authority's safeguarding officer. There are also close links with the local police, with whom staff share any concerns, such as unknown cars on campus. Staff and students receive training and information from the police community support worker. Recently this has included students receiving advice about the dangers of drowning, given the rise in fatalities at a local river. Staff have also received training about county lines. This contributes to a safe environment and helps the staff to quickly recognise the potential signs of exploitation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The chief executive officer has been in post since the beginning of 2017. She is supported by an experienced executive board and managers. Leadership and management are excellent. The management team is passionate and ambitious for students to achieve well. Leaders and managers are visible so their passion filters down to the whole staff team and students. The staff feel there are high levels of support from their managers and work together as a confident and cohesive team.

Governance arrangements are thorough and comprehensive, providing close monitoring. Managers and governors understand the college's strengths and weaknesses through a rigorous approach to self-assessment. The management team is forward thinking. The college's strategic objectives support the college to continue to develop and improve on its strengths.

There has been significant investment in areas such as building an agriculture and engineering hub to provide students with an innovative training resource and links with industry. Support from the local enterprise partnership is helping the college lead the way with the digitalisation of farming, through the construction of a high-tech robotic milking parlour and automated calf feeding system. Students can use the latest technology and are provided with the knowledge and experience of precision farming.

The accomplished leadership and management team promotes high expectations for what students can achieve, regardless of their background and needs. The welfare and development of students is a priority and managers provide them with high levels of support, education and opportunity. This thoroughly prepares students in all areas of their lives and for their future careers.

The college has developed productive and strong relationships with industry and employers. Students have the benefit of taking part in applied research projects such as partnering with agricultural industry giants to run grassland trials. Staff and students

have won recognised and prestigious industry-wide awards in many areas. These include winning the Farmers Weekly Apprentice of the Year; winning the Prince of Wales Challenge Trophy; and students took first and second place at a prestigious national livestock event. These experiences and opportunities all lead to exceptional progression rates into employment and further education.

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: SC040955

CEO: Catherine Dixon

Inspector(s)

Tina Ruffles, social care inspector

Rachel Holden, social care inspector

Stephen Smith, social care inspector

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