

Priory College Swindon

43 Bath Road, Swindon SN1 4AS

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 autism spectrum disorder.

The college admits both day and residential students. At the time of this inspection, 13 of the 37 students were residential. Two students under the age of 18 years are on roll, although only one was staying at the time of the inspection. The residential accommodation is located on three sites in the local community. Residential students are both under and over 18 years of age and of mixed gender.

Inspection dates 22 to 24 May 2019

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account inadequate

How well young people are helped and protected inadequate

The effectiveness of leaders and managers inadequate

Serious and widespread failures at the college mean young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded. The care and experiences of young people are poor, and they are not making sufficient progress.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 18 October 2017

What does the college need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- A suitable statement of the college's residential principles and practice is available to all students, parents and staff, is made known to residents, and is seen to work in practice. (NMS 1.1)
- There is an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new residential students. (NMS 2.1)
- The college has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies and arrangements for the care of residential students who are unwell and ensures that the physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing of residential students is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, dealing with medical emergencies and the use of non-prescription remedies. The arrangements are known to students and parents. (NMS 3.1)
- All residential and other accommodation provided is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible and adapted accommodation for any residential students with restricted mobility or other impairment. (NMS 5.5)
- Any use of surveillance equipment (e.g. CCTV cameras) or patrolling of buildings or grounds for security purposes does not intrude unreasonably on residents' privacy, is known to students and their parents and is compliant with legislative requirements/restrictions. (NMS 5.8)
- The college ensures that the welfare of residential students is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy, and appropriate action is taken to reduce any risks identified. (NMS 5.8)
- Where student accommodation is provided in halls, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) performed outside timetabled hours and full details recorded. (NMS 7.2)
- There is an effective working relationship between the college and local services, including local authority children's or adult services and the police, especially whenever suspicion or allegations of abuse have occurred. (NMS 11.3)
- The college has and consistently implements a written policy, which is effective in practice, to promote good behaviour amongst residential students. This policy includes: when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed. (NMS 12.1)
- The college's governing body and/or proprietor takes responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the residential and welfare provision, and takes appropriate action where necessary. (NMS 13.1)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the college and

action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.8)

- Colleges operate safe recruitment policies and adopt recruitment procedures in line with any regulatory requirements, having due regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The college must maintain a central register of all staff and others with potential access to resident students who are under 18. (NMS 14.1)
- Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with residential students has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in residence when newly appointed, and receives regular reviews of their residential practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in relation to residence. Staff and wardens meet regularly to review issues and concerns and reflect on their practice. (NMS 15.1)
- Residential students are actively encouraged to contribute views on the operation of residential provision, are able to raise concerns and make complaints, and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the residences. Feedback is provided to residential students on any action taken as a result of their comments or complaints. Residential students are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith. (17.1)
- The college has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with any relevant standards applicable to the college. Students are aware of how to make a complaint. (NMS 18.1)

The college's areas for development:

- Students are not provided with the care and support that they require to help them to develop independent living skills. Students are not consistently given help to develop skills in key areas such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, shopping and managing medication.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: inadequate

Significant shortfalls in leadership and management and failings in the support and help provided to students have led to a judgement of inadequate at this college.

Staff do not help residential students well enough to develop their independence or social skills. Staff do not set clear aims and objectives to enable students to improve their emotional resilience or life skills. For example, staff complete the food shopping and frequently cook for students. Older students are given their medication by staff and are not helped to manage this independently. Students are not consistently encouraged to develop their independence skills or promote their own health and well-being.

Moves into and within the residential provision are not well managed. A lack of considered planning hinders students' ability to feel that they belong. Managers do not ensure that pre-placement information is obtained. For example, there is no documentation in place for one student who recently moved into the college. His previous episodes of going missing are not adequately assessed. Staff have not considered his needs and risks or those of other students living together. Another student recently left, and it is unknown if he will return. This is due to a lack of available tutors and internet access issues. This poor planning does not promote students' welfare and as a result their progress falters.

Students are not educated about the dangers of online abuse and how to stay safe. Internet access is limited, due both to the restrictive controls in place by the college and to an unreliable connection in the residential houses. This has led to some students using their own Wi-Fi devices and mobiles without restriction. Staff do not consistently educate students about the risks posed to them by social media. While some tutors have addressed these and the police have visited to talk about online safety, there is no planned approach to raising students' awareness of the risks associated of being online. Managers cannot confirm what education sessions have had in this area or how many students have attended. This poor practice is concerning, as there have been several safeguarding incidents involving social media.

The quality of residential accommodation is too variable. Two of the houses are clean and tidy and provide students with good-quality living arrangements. The third house does not provide the same level of quality. It is unclean and poorly maintained. Staff do not actively help all students to take responsibility for their independence and self-care. One student's bedroom was found to be cluttered, dirty and littered with items of rubbish, clothing and cutlery. Another student said that their room was in a similar poor state. Staff are not providing proper oversight and support to enable students to live independently.

Some students participate in a range of appropriate activities, such as trips out for meals, drama club, football and bowling. Nevertheless, staff do not actively encourage

students to pursue their individual hobbies or areas of interest. Students do not partake in any volunteering or paid employment to enhance their life skills.

How well young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Students have not been safeguarded or had their safety prioritised by staff. Some students do not feel safe living at this college, and feel unable to talk to staff about their concerns.

Managers do not routinely assess the potential risk presented by students aged under 18 living with adult learners. Leaders and managers do not consider the physically aggressive behaviour of some students effectively or its impact on others. This has resulted in an altercation and a minor injury to one student. Staff recorded neither the incident nor the injury. First aid was not offered to the injured student. Leaders and managers do not take appropriate action to reduce identified risks.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that good-quality safeguarding training is provided to all staff. Not all staff have received updated online safeguarding training in line with company policy, and face-to-face training does not cover all areas of safeguarding. For example, information about peer-on-peer abuse, child sexual exploitation, online safety, 'county lines' and female genital mutilation is not discussed during the training. Consequently, staff lack the knowledge and skills to educate students about these potential risks.

Staff do not manage student behaviour effectively. For example, one young person was restrained by staff, yet there is no record of this incident or the use of physical intervention, as required. Incidents of students going missing are not tracked or monitored well. Students are not spoken to after 'missing' incidents, and information is not shared with placing authorities to provide oversight and assessment where needed. This means that students are not protected or helped to reduce risk-taking behaviours.

Safeguarding incidents are not always managed well, and safeguarding documents are poorly recorded and disorganised. Managers do not ensure that outcomes and responses to incidents are routinely documented. In some cases, leaders and managers have failed to refer allegations to the host local authority adult safeguarding team when required. This means that there is a lack of follow up and support for some students. Staff lack professional curiosity in their management of safeguarding incidents. This places students at risk of potential harm from repeated incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leadership and management are inadequate because of the failure to prioritise the safety and welfare of students. In addition, there is a lack of ambitious vision and a failure to address the improvements recommended at the previous inspection in 2017. This includes poor internet access and gaps in safer recruitment checks.

Leaders do not monitor and evaluate the quality of care and education provided

effectively. For example, safeguarding incidents, including going missing, self-harm, online safety and bullying, are not properly recorded or reviewed. Trends and patterns are not scrutinised to drive forward improvement and reduce potential incidents. Student well-being is not prioritised.

The quality of care provided to students is inconsistent and poorly planned. Leaders and managers have not ensured that there is a suitable statement of residential principles and practice. There is a lack of clarity about accommodation arrangements and staff limitations in supervising and monitoring students under 18. Door alarms are used in one house, despite a lack of risk assessment.

Communication, both between teaching and residential staff and with external agencies, is ineffective. Systems to enable students to thrive are not in place. For example, a residential staff member visiting a student at college was unknown to the tutor and caused concern. Managers and staff do not consistently share information with placing authorities about serious incidents involving students. For example, one student's episode of being missing, lack of college attendance and changes to living arrangements had not been shared. This absence of information-sharing and effective joint-working means that students' needs are not addressed quickly.

Governance is ineffective. Leaders are not held to account by governors due to a lack of challenge. For example, there has not been any scrutiny from governors for 12 months. This lack of proper oversight means that students' safety and progress are overlooked.

Consultation with students is weak. Students are unable to share their experiences with governors as part of a student council, although in the student guide this is stated to be in the provision. Students are not able to contribute to the strategic development of the college, and some students do not feel that their views are valued.

Several complaints have been made by students and parents about the quality of care provided at the college. The complaint records are of poor quality and fail to consistently include information about the actions taken and the outcome. Complaints are not responded to in line with organisational policy and are outside of its timescales. For example, a complaint from 2017 has not been properly resolved. Leaders do not meet complainants face to face. Consequently, complaints are not resolved to a good enough standard, and leaders and managers do not learn from incidents to improve practice.

Safer recruitment practices are weak and do not prioritise student welfare. Agency staff are not equipped with the necessary training in safeguarding or disability to meet the needs of students. Pre-employment checks by managers are not robust enough. For example, for agency staff, insufficient detail is obtained about disclosure and barring checks or references. References for permanent staff are not routinely verified. Some references are missing and gaps in employment history are not properly checked. Leaders and managers are not doing all that they can to prevent harm to students from those in a position of trust.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was conducted at short notice following concerns raised about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the college. Inspectors from social care and further education and skills examined the quality of education and residential provision together during the inspection.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference 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: Martin Bentham (acting)

Inspectors

Anna Gravelle, social care inspector

Tina Maddison, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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