

Boston College

Boston College, Skirbeck Road, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 6JF
Inspection of residential provision
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Boston College is situated close to the town centre of Boston on the east coast of Lincolnshire. There are four college sites, but all residential students live at the main site at Skirbeck Road, where the international office is based. The college offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses to degree level. The college has approximately 1,700 full-time students. There are 70 residential students, 54 of whom are under 18. Learners choose to live in halls, mostly under self-catering arrangements, or to stay with local families who have been approved by the college. The majority of residents are international students from Europe and Asia who are studying A levels.

Inspection dates 29 to 31 October 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: good

Date of last inspection: 30 January 2017

What does the college need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all staff and residential students are involved in fire evacuation drills. (Linked to NMS 7)
- Review the lone-working risk assessment, taking into account the relevant college policies. (Linked to NMS 6)
- Consider providing better evidence of regular pastoral care for the young people who live in the residential provision. (Linked to NMS 15)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

The college goes to great lengths to ensure that young people successfully adapt to college life. Staff undertake a very careful assessment of young people's skills prior to them starting at the college. This assessment enables the college to tailor support so that young people can thrive. Students receive an in-depth and very well structured induction that helps them settle into college life quickly. Young people are kept busy in their first few weeks, which helps them to make friends and familiarise themselves with the college and the local area, and prevents homesickness.

Staff provide exemplary individual support for young people, such as helping a young person overcome financial difficulties. A student said that the support from the college had been 'life-changing' for him. He described the opportunities the college staff have given him, such as organising a tutor for him and providing him with opportunities to learn new skills. He said: 'They are getting us ready for the working world.'

A wide range of cultural and social activities enable students to have a rich and varied experience at the college. For example, city visits have helped to develop young people's confidence, self-esteem and English language skills. Students very much value the staff's determination to provide memorable life experiences.

Young people said that they appreciate clubs like the debating club because it helps them to practise their English language skills. Additionally, young people are pointed towards a community resource that helps them to further improve their English. Most residential students attend this college with the aim of improving their English because they believe it will improve their life chances. The college provides many opportunities for young people to improve their understanding of English culture. An agent said: 'Studying at Boston College has been an enriching experience for our students and has helped them mature and broaden their horizons.'

Home-stay accommodation is exemplary. Host families care about the young people very much. One family took a young person on holiday with them during the half term. Hosts are well prepared for their role and the college provides good support for them.

Young people enjoy their stays in the residential flats. They enjoy the independence that they are given and the trust that is placed in them. Staff are available if young people are anxious or worried. A young person said that the staff 'always want to help, and they care about us'. Staff build warm and nurturing relationships with young people.

The views of young people are important to college staff. Examples of young people's views being taken seriously include the decision to provide a gated entrance to the campus. Young people feel safer as a result. A high percentage of residential students are involved in the student union and have been pivotal in organising the mental health week initiative and the upcoming Christmas market. A residential student is also a student governor. This demonstrates that this small cohort of residential students have a high profile within the college.

There is good communication between academic and residential staff. This means that worries and concerns can be communicated quickly and easily. Young people have strong attendance in college and do very well academically compared to their peers who are not residents. They feel very well supported with their academic studies. Additional 'study skills sessions' have also been provided for residential students.

Young people like their flats. To further improve the standard of accommodation, a refurbishment programme is underway. The common room has recently been refurbished. As a result, it is now used much more often. Greater interaction in the common room means that young people are less vulnerable to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Young people have also been provided with private study rooms, which they greatly appreciate. The college is situated close to the town centre and leisure facilities. This means that young people have easy access to shops and other amenities, such as the local swimming pool to which they have free access. They also have good access to other sporting activities and local performing-arts clubs.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Young people feel safe. Gated access to the college has helped to improve the safety of young people. The college's safeguarding team works hard to ensure that child protection issues and safeguarding concerns are properly referred, documented and acted on. Young people are very well supported in difficult times, such as after a bereavement or when experiencing family difficulties.

The behaviour of residential students is very good. On the rare occasions that incidents have occurred, they have been addressed quickly and effectively. Young people who have broken the rules have not repeated these offences. Disciplinary action is very successful in helping young people to manage their own behaviour. Additionally, very close, effective working relationships with drug and alcohol agencies and a clear strategic approach mean that young people, college-wide, stop using illegal substances.

The college has recognised particular local safeguarding concerns within the community and has initiated close working partnerships with relevant agencies, such as the

Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority and a mental health service. They have developed teaching and awareness-raising materials in partnership with these agencies. This has ensured that young people have received crucial training and development in this important area. This is excellent safeguarding practice given the context of the area in which the college is situated.

Robust health and safety procedures help to keep young people safe. Young people residing at the college practise fire evacuations termly. During these evacuations, night wardens receive fire safety training. However, fire drill records could be improved because they do not show which young people and night wardens have taken part in the drills.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The college principal is driven, determined and enthusiastic. Leaders and managers are very ambitious for young people. They ensure that residential students feel valued and have excellent academic, social and cultural experiences. There is a clear vision that all staff have endorsed: 'To be a brilliant college and for every learner to be brilliant.'

Leaders have an in-depth understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the college. The college's self-evaluation report for the residential provision confirms that potential areas for improvement are identified and addressed. The report also shows that leaders are not complacent. They have clear strategies for building on identified strengths.

Governance arrangements are robust. Governors have an in-depth understanding of the residential provision, hold leaders to account and offer strong and effective challenge. Governors have a very clear understanding of the particular vulnerabilities of the young people in the residential provision, particularly international students.

Partner agencies agreed that staff communicate effectively and are very responsive. They also said that the college provides excellent individual support. An agent said: 'All the staff members we have come into contact with are very professional, highly experienced, responsible and caring individuals. All our enquiries are always answered promptly and meticulously, which enables us to provide high-quality service to our students and their parents.'

Staff have warm and supportive relationships with young people. However, the wardens' logs do not currently provide a commentary on this, as they only cite security responsibilities. Recording their pastoral role will act as an extra safeguard for young people. Staff have a good understanding of the college's safeguarding procedures and implement these well. They mostly work in isolation, for example overnight. The lone-working risk assessment could be improved to reflect the staff's safeguarding practice.

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: SC055672

Principal/CEO: Jo Maher

Inspectors

Joanne Vyas: social care inspector

Phillip Morris: social care inspector

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