

# Highbury College

Tudor Crescent, Portsmouth PO6 2SA

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Highbury College is a medium-sized general further education college serving the city of Portsmouth and the surrounding areas of East Hampshire, Fareham, Gosport and Havant. The college has four centres: Highbury Campus, Highbury Northarbour Centre, Highbury Arundel Centre and Highbury Apprenticeships (Birmingham). The college provides education and training programmes in a number of community venues in and around Portsmouth.

This college offers accommodation on the Highbury site for up to 15 students under the age of 18 on site and can also offer accommodation off site with host families.

Inspection dates      26 to 28 November 2019

**Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account**      Requires improvement to be good

How well young people are helped and protected      Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers      Requires improvement to be good

**Overall judgement at last inspection:**      **Not applicable**

**Date of last inspection:** N/A

## Key findings from this inspection

This college requires improvement to be good because:

- Monitoring and action plans to develop the residential provision lack depth and detail.
- Students' comments about aspects of their accommodation have not been responded to or addressed.
- Some staff recruitment records are not up to standard.
- The senior management team has undergone significant changes. The new team is not yet fully established and settled. This means that leadership and governance is unable to influence the college's development at this time.

The college's strengths:

- Safeguarding issues are addressed promptly and effectively and are underpinned by good communication with external agencies.
- Host families are vetted, monitored and supported to a good standard.
- Students receive very good pastoral support from a number of staff on site who are caring, approachable and warm. The individual needs and vulnerabilities of students are known and support is swiftly put in place when needed.
- The health and safety of the students is seen as paramount and well organised systems ensure that this is closely monitored.
- Managers are aware of the weaknesses in the setting and are working hard during an unsettled period to rectify these. They welcome feedback from others and are willing to address any concerns that are raised.
- A wide variety of students from different cultures and backgrounds ensures that this is a rich and diverse residential population with pupils who can learn from each other and celebrate diversity.

## What does the college need to do to improve? Recommendations

- 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. (National minimum standards for further education residential accommodation. 5.5).

This is in relation to ensuring all areas are clean and well maintained.

- Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for residential students, which are reasonable accessible from the sleeping accommodation. All toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy for residential students. (National minimum standards for further education residential accommodation. 16.1).

This is in relation to ensuring that issues such as the provision of sanitary product disposal are carefully and sensitively considered.

- 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. (National minimum standards for further education residential accommodation. 14.1).

This is specifically in relation to ensuring that all staff have had references supplied.

- The college's leadership, management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of residential students. (National minimum standards for further education residential accommodation. 13.1).

This is in relation to ensuring that governors and managers are actively and effectively involved in the monitoring and scrutiny of the residential provision.

## Inspection judgements

**Overall experiences and progress of young people:** requires improvement to be good

While students report that they are happy at the college some have raised concerns that have not been dealt with appropriately as complaints. This is a lost opportunity to address issues at an early stage and to promote the students' voice. For example, students have criticised of the cleanliness of the communal living areas. This was not addressed prior to the inspection.

Students apply themselves to their studies and enjoy the wider opportunities of student life in a large and cosmopolitan city. Data shows that students progress well and go on to their intended next stage, whether this is further education or university.

There are expectations that students attending the college already have the skills and knowledge to live independently and to be competent in areas such as catering and travel. There is an expectation that the college is not responsible for students' medical well-being, but the pre-admission information is not explicit in stating that the college expects the students to be competent in administering their own medication. This could lead to confusion, especially if a student with English as their second language is not able to understand medication instructions.

Students said that they have ready access to a number of different staff especially if they are feeling unhappy, worried or unwell. Attendance is closely monitored, and staff respond swiftly if students are not attending their lessons or are having problems with **tardiness**. This supervision ensures that students know that there are staff who care for their success and progress.

A number of enriching activities are arranged and students have the opportunity to mix socially with their friends. All are able to contact their families via their personal electronic equipment such as mobile telephones and tablets. This ensures that they do not lose touch and have contacts outside of the college community.

Only one washing machine is available for the students to use despite the fact they are responsible for their own laundry. At the time of the inspection there was reduced occupancy in the block and so access to the machines was not overly problematic. However, access to the laundry facilities will be a challenge if numbers increase.

The student population is a wide rich mix of people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. They enjoy the opportunities this gives them to learn from each other and make new friends. In this context, culture and diversity are celebrated and enjoyed. However, this tenet has not been applied across the whole population. The arrangements for the disposal of sanitary products compromised the dignity and privacy of female students as there were insufficient sanitary bins available and students had to go to other floors to dispose of sanitary waste.

**How well young people are helped and protected:** requires improvement to be good

There has been internal and external scrutiny regarding the fire safety of the residential provision. This is in relation to cladding around the building. There are ongoing plans to replace the external cladding of the building. The schedule of works is out for tender and a start date is awaited. Specific plans are in place and additional measures have been applied to address the concerns in the meantime. These include additional staffing at night and ensuring that every student is aware of what to do in the event of the need to evacuate the building. Regular checks of the building and fire systems as well as fire drills ensure that awareness is maintained. Importantly, managers have sought advice and checks from the local Fire Rescue Service to ensure that the measures in place are likely to be effective.

The health and safety of students and staff is given a high priority around the whole campus. The attention to detail shown by the safety manager ensures that there is an embedded expectation of high standards from all staff and students. This is underpinned by close monitoring of issues and the prompt rectification of identified shortfalls.

There are gaps in some recruitment records for some staff who have been working on site for a more than 18 months. As a result, managers are carrying out an ongoing audit of staff recruitment records. The ongoing action plan did not address all the identified gaps in the recruitment records. More recent appointments have had the necessary background checks carried out. All staff have regular updated checks through the Disclosure and Barring Scheme, but not all have appropriate references on file. These significant shortfalls undermine the wider efforts made in relation to safeguarding practice.

Staff are aware of what to do and who to inform if they have concerns about a student's welfare. Safeguarding systems are effective and liaison with external agencies is good. There is positive feedback from external safeguarding professionals about managers identifying concerns and sharing them promptly so that issues and risks can be addressed and reduced.

There are clear boundaries and expectations with regards to behaviour and conduct. Students understand these and are aware of the consequences if they breach the rules. Parents and carers are kept informed if there is a need to take action due to a student's misbehaviour so that transparency and a sense of working together is maintained. Sanctions for misbehaviour are rare and students think that the rules are fair and sensible.

There are clear protocols in place should a student be missing or absent without permission whether from the accommodation on site or from host families. There have been no incidents where the police have had to be involved and the few incidents where students have been late have been treated as breaches of curfew.

Prior to admission it is made clear to families that there are levels of maturity and responsibility expected from students and that students should have the skills to live independently with minimal oversight. Nevertheless, support is readily available for the students in areas such as bullying, mental and sexual health and internet safety. This helps students to feel safe and not isolated.

**The effectiveness of leaders and managers:** requires improvement to be good

There has been a significant turnover of senior staff in key positions and an external agency is providing support and oversight to help stabilise the current management arrangements. Staff report that they are now feeling more optimistic and that morale is slowly improving.

Despite the challenges this has presented, pastoral staff work hard to support residential students and strive to promote their welfare and safety. However, efforts to improve the residential service are not clearly structured and do not show cohesive management or governors' overview and planning. For example, the plan to refurbish the internal areas of the residential provision is lacking in detail and there is no evidence that the governors have seen, scrutinised or commented upon it. Areas of the residential accommodation need redecoration and refurbishment. Students are critical of the cleanliness of the rooms and communal areas when they moved into the accommodation.

Sharing of information between managers is not always effective and this sometimes prevents a wider discussion of issues and the consideration of the wider context and implications. For example, the poor provisions for the disposal of sanitary products was seen as a hygiene issue for cleaning staff but its impact on the dignity and privacy of female residential students was not considered.

Members of staff are trained in areas such as recognising safeguarding issues and fire safety. They receive regular appraisals and meetings with their managers to ensure that they are supporting the students and carrying out their duties effectively.

Host families are visited regularly to ensure that they are providing a good standard of safe accommodation and that they are appropriately trained to carry out their role.

Key members of staff who work with the residential students are committed to improving the students' experience and success. The support and insight provided are sensitive and guidance is readily available if a student is unwell or worried. Feedback from students regarding the care and approach of these key members of staff is very positive.

## **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:** 2569652

**Acting principal at time of inspection:** Liza Walter-Nelson.

### **Inspectors**

Paul Taylor, social care inspector

Liz Driver, social care inspector



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