

The SMB Group

Stephenson Campus, Thornborough Road, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 3TN

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

SMB College provides residential accommodation at the Brooksby Campus. This is a land-based further education campus, situated in a mainly agricultural area close to the market town of Melton Mowbray. The college offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses. Accommodation is also provided at the Stephenson campus, which is situated close to the nearby town of Coalville, and provides lodgings with host families (homestay) only. This is used solely for young people undertaking apprenticeships.

The college, following a merger, was registered with Ofsted in February 2021.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account	requires improvement to be good
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How well young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The college is not yet delivering good help and care for young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

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

The SMB college group is formed of two merged colleges. This is the first inspection of the residential and homestay provision since the merger.

Staff working in the residential provision are known as wardens. Good relationships are evident between staff and young people. The staff are caring and considerate. Young people said that they feel well supported by the wardens and cleaning staff. However, staff do not always receive the training that they need to respond to the young people's needs effectively. For example, one young person, who according to a grandparent, has Asperger syndrome was not supported as well as she could have been during her induction into the college residences. This was because staff had not received training or development to enable them to fully understand her needs.

Staff do not always consult with young people about their experiences of staying in residence. Individual discussions between staff and young people are not consistently taking place. An example of this is the lack of individual support for a young person with additional needs. A lack of consultation with the young person and their family meant that staff were unaware of the best way to provide support and ensure that the young person felt safe.

The homestay provision is well established. Young people receive good care. They are well matched to the homestay families. Good relationships are promoted because young people know who they will be staying with. Importantly, this also helps young people to feel safe and supported. Some young people are a long way from home and the impact of this is understood by the homestay families and college staff. Young people are encouraged to remain in contact with their families and friends, to reduce their worries and anxieties. Young people in homestay are all undertaking apprenticeships. Employers reported that young people make good progress, and that they are safe and on track to have good careers.

Young people make progress while staying in residence. For example, one young person had missed a great deal of education prior to coming to this college. Since residing at the college, his attendance has improved, and he is now making progress. Another young person who did not have a positive induction into college is now doing well. She has developed her independence skills, and is better prepared to cope with college life.

Residing at the college helps to prepare young people for the future. They receive good help and support to achieve the required standards in education, training and apprenticeships. Some young people are focused on sporting achievements. Strong partnerships between the college and specialist sports coaches help young people to achieve their aims.

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

The halls of residence have benefited from some financial investment to make improvements to the physical environment. However, there are shortfalls in the quality of the accommodation, including some potential hazards that have not been addressed. For example, there is a poorly designed kitchenette area. A bathroom and bedroom, used by young people and viewed by inspectors have signs of damp because of poor ventilation. A small minority of shared rooms are small and lack storage space. The student common room, where young people meet and socialise, has damaged ceiling tiles. The manager of the residential areas has not ensured that a college risk assessment relating to window restraints has been adhered to.

Despite issues with the accommodation, young people said that they feel safe in the residential provision. They feel confident about speaking to the wardens and other college staff, should they have any worries or concerns. College staff, both in residences and across the college, have received important safeguarding training and have attended briefings about safeguarding children. For example, staff have received training in relation to Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. Staff across the college have had training in understanding young people's emotional and mental health, and how to support young people experiencing difficulties.

The behaviour of young people in the residential provision is good. The wardens manage relationships between the young people well. Wardens and college staff have clear behavioural expectations and boundaries. They do not accept poor behaviour. Leaders of the college have increased security on the site. Security staff are on duty 24 hours a day. Additionally, new security gates have been installed. This helps young people to feel safe and secure.

Wardens and college staff know the whereabouts of young people. Young people do not go missing from the residential provision. College leaders and managers have no concerns that young people misuse drugs or alcohol. Young people remain focused on their studies and/or sporting ambitions. Consequently, young people remain on track to do well.

Staff in the residential provision undertake mandatory safeguarding training. This has also included cleaning staff, which is good practice. The college complies with the 'Prevent' duty, including the training and development of staff. This means that staff know what action to take, should they have any concerns regarding the radicalisation of young people.

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

Despite leaders and managers ensuring that staff receive good-quality training generally, there was an example of staff not having specific training to meet the individual needs of a young person. A lack of staff training and an insufficient

understanding of the young person's specific needs, led to a difficult start to staying in residence for this young person.

Managers have not ensured that gaps in the employment history for a member of staff, in the residential provision were accounted for. This has the potential to place young people at risk. Additionally, host families were not included in the college's single central record. This would be expected, given their extensive contact with young people.

The manager in the residential provision has not ensured that staff adhere to college policy and procedure as a team. The manager and staff have used a social media platform for communication purposes in their day-to-day work. College leaders did not know that this form of communication was being used. College leaders are taking action to investigate this matter. The manager and staff had not considered the college's policy, nor the implications of using electronic communications outside of existing college systems.

The governor with responsibility for the residential provision is also the vice-chair of the board of governors. She is a regular visitor to the residential accommodation. She provides strong support and challenge for college leaders. She understands the journey of the college, including the strengths and the areas requiring development.

Leaders are committed to providing a good-quality service. They have a grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the college's residential provision. They have already invested significantly in the residential accommodation. This investment continues because they are committed to making the experiences of young people the best they can be. Leaders are planning redevelopment of the residential accommodation to provide accommodation for disabled young people, which is not currently in place.

College leaders have recently faced significant changes and challenges. One of the most significant developments has been the college merger. This required an overhaul of the internal college systems. Immediately following the merger, the COVID-19 pandemic caused considerable disruption. The pandemic meant that the college had to suspend the residential provision. Leaders and managers worked hard through the pandemic to support young people and staff. College leaders understand the journey that this college is on in relation to the residential provision. They are determined to get this right for the benefit of the young people.

What does the college need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of residential students are ensured. (NMS 6.2)
- The college ensures that: when disabled students are resident, specialist training is undertaken to enhance staff knowledge and understanding about their additional needs. (NMS 11.1)
- The college follows and maintains policies and documents described in Appendix 1. (NMS 13.7)
- 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)

Points for improvement

- College leaders should consider ways to improve the participation and contribution of residential students, as a distinct group, within the wider college. (Linked to NMS 17.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of young people, 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: 2630852

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Inspectors

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