

# Myerscough College

Myerscough College, Myerscough Hall, St. Michaels Road, Bilborrow, Preston PR3 0RY

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Myerscough College is a specialist land-based, science, engineering and sports college located near Preston in Lancashire. The main campus includes 2 farms, horticultural provision, ornamental gardens, 2 sports centres, a golf academy, sports pitches, engineering workshops, animal, equine, farriery, arboriculture and veterinary nursing facilities.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 28 February to 2 March 2022

<b>Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account</b>	<b>good</b>
How well young people are helped and protected	outstanding
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good

The college provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 5 December 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of young people: good

Young people willingly shared their views with inspectors throughout the inspection. They offered open, articulate and lively opinions about their college courses, their college accommodation and what they hope to achieve in their lives. Many recognise and value the way that the college has enabled them to follow their passions, exercise their independence and learn new skills to prepare them for their futures.

Young people said that living on campus is a positive choice, and that they always feel safe, enjoy living in a warm and friendly community, and are very well supported to achieve the best they can. They like residential staff, and said that they are always there when needed and always make sure everyone is safe and well. Sports students said that their coaches are very important to them, look after their health and well-being, and encourage positive teamwork. This creates close-knit friendship groups, where young people enjoy each other's company.

Young people with additional support needs said that they are well cared for and enjoy making friends, following a course that interests them and making independent choices. They know how to get help when they need it, including overnight, and appreciate the residential staff dropping by each day to 'make sure they were OK'.

Staff understand the importance of identifying and supporting young people's mental health needs and respond promptly to any concerns. When crises occur, staff are reflective about their actions and review knowledge and systems to better prevent decline in young people's well-being. A recent situation has resulted in a review of how best to support and guide young people who self-medicate to take their medication regularly.

Young people said that, while they are largely happy with their residential experience, there are some niggles that remain, despite having expressed their views to staff on more than one occasion. One young person said, 'We are always being asked for our suggestions, but we don't always see what the response is.' Some young people are unclear about the arrangements for student representatives. They do not know who the representatives are and do not receive feedback from them or from opinion surveys they complete. However, they also recognise that some changes, such as all-female gym nights, improved campus lighting and improved facilities and activities at the library and 'Stumble Inn', have resulted from their student voice being listened to by senior leaders. For the minority of students who remain in college accommodation at weekends, there is little available for them to do unless they are involved in organised sport, and some feel lonely and isolated until their friends return on Sundays.

Young people said, and senior managers confirmed, that recent student consultations had highlighted dissatisfaction with food options available. Although food choice is generally good, the quality is variable, and vegetarian options are

limited. At weekends, sports and equine students leave campus before the cafeteria is open, and not all students know how to access early breakfast. Other students feel that the inflexibility of fixed-cost, five-day or seven-day meal provision is unfair, and many want cookers to be available in residential kitchens to cook their own food. Senior leaders are reviewing these suggestions.

Young people have asked for more spaces to be available for small social gatherings, and most said they avoid the large common room because it is 'empty'. Inspectors found it to be an unwelcoming and disorganised space. College library staff welcome students seven days a week, and recent redecoration has created some pleasant social areas for students to sit and chat. The quality of residential accommodation is variable, and many open-plan kitchen and lounge areas are unclean and avoided by students. The college has an ambitious accommodation development plan and is gradually upgrading rooms to single occupancy with en-suite facilities.

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

Students said that they feel safe and have access to appropriate support from staff 24 hours per day. Incidents of poor behaviour, including use of drugs and alcohol, are dealt with swiftly and in accordance with college rules, which are well known to students. Students said that they live in a caring community, they 'look out for each other', and that the staff are relentless in providing support, through texts, conversations, emails, surveys and tutorial sessions.

Students are consulted about the support they receive during regular consultation events and surveys. They have confidence in staff to address their concerns and worries. Following the Everyone's Invited campaign on social media, staff talked specifically to female students to explore the topic and appropriate action was taken to address arising issues. Staff remain vigilant to these concerns and have developed an action plan to positively support female student safety and well-being.

The college has a comprehensive signing out system in place, including the use of key fobs and CCTV systems to enhance student safety and monitor absence in a highly effective way. This reassures students that staff know when they have returned to halls at night and that, should anything have happened to them, staff would know to look for them.

There are effective policies and procedures in place regarding anti-bullying and harassment, and students and staff have a good knowledge of these. Students reported, and records confirm, that any form of bullying, including racism, homophobia, hate crimes and online bullying, is addressed swiftly through a regime of re-education and clear boundaries. A newly introduced positive behaviour policy, a student charter and the college strategy known as FREDIE are all based on fairness, respect, equality, diversity, inclusion and engagement, and set out high expectations for a safe living and learning campus. Students receive training on how to tackle bullying, including online bullying, through the tutorial programme.

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have made significant improvement to staff selection processes to promote the principles of safe recruitment. Where there is any doubt about suitability, senior leaders explore the matter and, ultimately, the college principal reviews and signs off any risk assessments for suitability.

The college has further invested in the creation and development of a student welfare team and has appointed staff with relevant skills and qualifications to specific roles. The recent introduction of a college-wide electronic recording system means that staff can identify, receive, track and monitor all safeguarding incidents and concerns. Recording is detailed and there is clear evidence of follow-up by staff. Students are offered a range of services to support them, especially when there are concerns about mental health. Any safeguarding concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively and there is effective liaison with appropriate professionals.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

All leaders and managers, including governors, articulate the same passion and drive for working towards excellence for young people's lived experience. Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong commitment to improving academic and social experiences. They have an ambitious vision, distilled into a clear strategic plan for improvement. They actively gather and reflect on young people's thoughts and feelings about college life and take them into account in the development of college provision. All recognise that the college is part-way through an ambitious 10-year plan, and that progress in some areas, such as social activity, is just beginning to recover from the restrictions of COVID-19 arrangements.

Leaders and managers use effective monitoring and reporting systems to understand young people's progress and take prompt action to address any area of concern, including academic under-achievement. Swift and transparent management reflection promotes a culture of 'could the college have done more to support?'. This means that young people benefit from individualised offers of help and support that give them the best chance of success. College-wide staff targets, such as improving student attendance, demonstrate an understanding of the building blocks necessary for creating positive futures. All recommendations from the last inspection have been suitably addressed.

Significant change in both senior leadership and operational management roles is ongoing. Residential services are now integrated into college life, and expert managers have been appointed to support the work of residential support officers so that they can fully implement the vision set out in the strategic plan. Effective induction support ensures that all mandatory staff training is completed. Staff welfare is promoted through a mentor system that encourages self-appraisal of progress. Experienced staff provide modelling and support to new staff so that they take additional responsibility when they are ready. Newly introduced reflective practice supervision enhances staff welfare and promotes effective safeguarding practice.

Systems for monitoring residential service provision are established, and governors review progress against the residential development plan. However, inspectors found some shortfalls in the cleanliness of accommodation, access to facilities and activity during weekends, and access to breakfast for some students. A strong student voice means that the college is aware of most of these concerns but has yet to resolve them.

College leaders developed a positive approach to managing restrictions imposed by COVID-19. This enabled students and staff to stay safe while remaining engaged in college life. The college principal and governors continued to attend student representative meetings online, and there is now a clear recovery programme in place that is increasing resources to help many students who experience a decline in their mental health and well-being.

Staff from all disciplines say that there are high-quality professional relationships that focus on meeting students' needs, educating them well, and providing a safe and positive experience during their time at college. Prompt action is taken when other services fail to provide effective support for young people, such as contacting the local authority virtual head to chase essential transition planning for a looked after young person. Staff foster good relationships with external employers to enable young people to access a wide variety of work-experience placements.

## **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:** SC059709

**Principal/CEO:** Alison Robinson

### **Inspectors**

Denise Jolly, Social Care Inspector

Helen Humphreys, Social Care Inspector

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