

Bedford College

Shuttleworth College, Old Warden Park, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 9EA

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

The residential component of Bedford College is set within a self-contained campus in the grounds of Shuttleworth College. Shuttleworth College offers agricultural and environmental education, as well as animal sciences and equine studies courses.

There are currently 28 residential students under the age of 18 and 20 residential students over 18. They are accommodated in four residential halls that are split into under 18, over 18 and male and female halls. A fifth residential hall is not currently in use.

The student experience and progression manager oversees the residential provision and has been in this role for three years.

The inspectors only inspected the residential provision at this college.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2022

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 31 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: good

Students benefit from the strong care and support that they receive from the dedicated staff. The students enjoy an enriching and engaging learning environment. Students are overwhelmingly positive about their residential experience.

The staff and manager have excellent relationships with the students and know them well. Staff provide fun activities which the students and staff all engage in. Students who are less socially confident are included and their involvement is encouraged by staff. Parents are very positive about the residential provision, with residential staff reported to look after the students as a good parent would.

Students make progress in a wide range of areas because of their residential experience. Benefits include increased educational attainment and improved attendance. Staff are available for the students if they need them but give them adequate space so that they can gain independence away from adults. As a result, students become increasingly independent. The staff model inclusive behaviours and attitudes and students emulate these. Staying in residence is fun, helps students to establish and maintain friendships and enhances students' well-being.

Students engage in several initiatives that ensure they contribute positively to the immediate community and local area. Students participated in fundraising activities such as a Christmas tree competition at the local church and have laid wreaths with community members on Remembrance Sunday. Consequently, community links are good.

Students have access to a good range of mental health support. This includes an internal counsellor, a mental health practitioner and a psychological well-being practitioner. Residential students are positive about the resources available and access these when needed.

The residential accommodation needs attention. For example, windows were not clean and there were many rooms with nowhere to hang towels. Students said that the water pressure in one of the halls of residence is too weak on the top floor for them to be able to wash their hair effectively. Consequently, the college's stated ambition of providing a high standard of accommodation is not consistently achieved.

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

The inclusive, supportive environment that staff and managers have created significantly contributes to students feeling safe. All students spoken with said that they can talk to staff if they have a concern. They said that staff are approachable

and accessible. When safeguarding concerns arise in the residential provision, these are managed sufficiently. However, the inspection identified procedural shortfalls in safeguarding. While managers took immediate action during the inspection to begin to address these issues, internal monitoring arrangements had not been strong enough to pick them up.

Since the last social care inspection, there have been two incidents when the conduct of staff outside of the residential team has raised significant safeguarding concerns. On one of these occasions, college safeguarding leads did not share information with the local authority designated officer (LADO) until after the college had investigated the concerns. This meant that the process was potentially compromised as the LADO was prevented from directing the investigation.

Following a recent change to an electronic recruitment system, application forms have not been prompting applicants to provide a full employment history. This conflicts with what the statutory guidance says should happen and the college's own recruitment policy. Managers took immediate action to change the process and began a retrospective audit of the recruitment records of any staff recruited under the new system.

The staff and managers use clear strategies to develop students' understanding of keeping safe. Online safety modules are presented in stand-alone sessions but also interwoven into other modules such as peer-on-peer abuse, the Prevent Duty, cyber bullying and healthy relationships. When gaps in students' understanding are identified, targeted work is undertaken to ensure their awareness, and ability to keep themselves safe increases.

Staff responded diligently and effectively to the management of COVID-19. Students said that this contributed to their sense of safety and security. Students said that the reassurance they felt in respect of the actions taken to reduce infection transmission significantly lowered their anxieties.

There have been no physical interventions. No students have gone missing from the residential provision. Students understand behavioural expectations and say that behaviour is generally good in the residential provision.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The residential manager is highly regarded by staff and students alike. He is innovative and has high aspirations for the quality of the service. The manager has a realistic understanding of current issues and most areas for improvement. For example, records show his attempts to rectify issues with the accommodation.

The manager tenaciously promotes and disseminates learning and development in, and understanding of, equality and diversity to residential students and the wider college. This serves to challenge discriminatory beliefs and encourage positive change.

The residential manager ensures that his staff receive regular formal supervisions. This enables staff to have planned, protected time to reflect on their practice and the experiences of the students. The staff have access to training to support them in their roles. Staff have all completed fire-safety training and several staff across the site have had mental health first-aid training. The staff feel supported and well managed.

Leaders and managers ensure that students' views are routinely and proactively sought and responded to. As a result, the students' voice is a significant presence in the college. Students are encouraged to use their voice to make positive social change. This has led to staff and managers creating initiatives in response to current affairs. Staff and students challenge victim-blaming language and attitudes towards gender-based violence. Under the title 'It is not OK', they created publications and posters to reverse the narrative.

Residential staff link with education staff to ensure that the needs and experiences of residential students are understood. Leaders and managers understand the progress that students make. A residential-specific self-assessment report shows good oversight and understanding of students' experiences and progress while identifying actions for improvement.

Leaders and managers ensure that Disclosure and Barring Service checks are completed for any person over 18 who is not employed by the college and lives on site. However, they have not ensured that there is a written agreement in place. Consequently, it is unclear if individuals understand and agree to minimum expectations about their conduct.

Management monitoring has not been strong enough to identify some of the safeguarding issues picked up at this inspection. There is lack of clarity in policies and procedures on raising low-level concerns. This lack of clarity has the potential to limit staff's understanding of what to do if they have concerns.

What does the college need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for accommodation of students under 18 by further education colleges

■ Ensure that:

- arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of residential students;
- such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State that applies to the college and
- all staff who have responsibility for the care of residential students undertake safeguarding training, including regular updating. When disabled students are resident, specialist training is undertaken to enhance staff knowledge and understanding about their additional needs.

(NMS for the accommodation of students under 18 by FE colleges, 11.1)

- Ensure there is a written agreement between the college and any person over 18 not employed by the college but living in the same premises as the resident students (for example, members of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with under-18 residents, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors, and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with resident students under 18. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence.

(NMS for the accommodation of students under 18 by FE colleges, 14.3)

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the residential accommodation is appropriately monitored, cleaned and maintained.
- The registered person should ensure that internal and external management monitoring are effective and contribute to improvements.

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: SC041911

Principal/CEO: Ian Pryce

Inspectors

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector

Lianne Bradford, Social Care Inspector

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