

Communication Specialist College Doncaster

Communication Specialist College Doncaster, Leger Way, Doncaster, South Yorkshire
DN2 6AY

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

The specialist communication college is situated on the outskirts of the city of Doncaster. The college is part of Doncaster Deaf Trust. The college provides individualised programmes of study to children and young people who are deaf, hearing impaired, have autistic spectrum condition or a communication difficulty. It is located on 24 acres of grounds. Young people access a wide range of vocational courses delivered in real working environments.

The college residential lodge is situated in the Doncaster Deaf Trust grounds. The lodge has recently been updated and a programme of refurbishment continues. The young people who live in the lodge access a wide range of activities. They are supported to develop their social and independence skills in college and the wider community.

The residential manager has worked at the college for 15 years in various roles. He took up the post of residential manager in April 2019. The executive principal of the college has been in post since April 2019. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2022

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.

Date of last inspection: 11 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

The young people are proud to be a part of the college. They like staying in residence as this provides them with the opportunity to socialise and make friends. The young people are supported by a staff team that knows them extremely well. The staff have a deep understanding of complex communication styles. Their knowledge enables them to listen to young people's wishes and feelings effectively. As a result, the young people feel a strong sense of value and belonging.

The young people's emotional well-being is extremely well supported by a range of on-site specialist services. These services include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and a college counsellor. The specialist services help to deliver a range of innovative therapies which are completely tailored to an individual's needs. The young people engage well with the wealth of support offered. Over time, their emotional health and well-being significantly improves. Young people build a strong sense of identity and their self-confidence flourishes.

The staff consistently promote the importance of good physical health. The staff encourage the young people to be active and to eat healthily. The college has a variety of facilities on site which help young people to exercise. Facilities include a range of adapted bikes, a gym, a sports hall and sports courts. The college nurse provides health and well-being advice to staff and also direct support to young people. She has excellent links with other health professionals, who she invites into the residence to provide specialist support. The information that the college nurse provides supports the work that staff do with the young people during their residential time.

Young people make remarkable progress with their education. There is a seamless approach between college staff and residential staff. Young people complete a wide range of qualifications according to their interests and potential. There is a significant emphasis on preparing young people for work and life beyond the college. Research is carried out by the staff to find out what skills employers are looking for. They then make sure that young people who do not undertake formal qualifications work towards skills that employers think are most useful. This means that young people value the work they are doing, knowing it is likely to lead to work or further training.

Young people become increasingly independent through their time in the residential provision. Most work on their self-care skills, including cooking, managing finances and their relationships. Young people recognise how much progress they make and say this is one of the best aspects of being in the residence. Some of the approaches used are based around therapies and are truly innovative. From the work they complete, young people's social skills increase significantly.

The voice of young people is central to what happens in the residence. They share their views in a variety of ways, including through regular 'lodge meetings'. The young people's attendance and engagement in these meetings is excellent. Staff respond to young people's suggestions positively when they can. When wishes cannot be granted, young people accept the reasons why, due to the strength of the relationships they have with staff. The approach to listening to young people means that they become confident in sharing their views, with an expectation that they will be listened to. For some young people, this is a significant improvement on their previous experiences and adds a great deal to their sense of self-worth.

The range of activities young people undertake increases their social opportunities and broadens their life experiences. The activities that young people enjoy include climbing, laser quest, shopping and alpaca walks. The staff constantly strive to offer new activities to promote new experiences.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Incidents of challenging behaviour are rare. The young people understand the rules and boundaries set by the staff. They enjoy rewards for their achievements. Staff use their excellent relationships with young people to manage any behaviour issues and any concerns are quickly resolved. The staff pick up on the smallest of signs a young person is upset, and they use positive strategies to help them. The young people say that they feel safe, and they feel they can share any worries with the staff.

Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's often complex needs and recognise the additional risks that these young people face. The young people undertake a range of creative activities individually and in groups which are tailored to their learning and communication needs. The work increases their understanding of dangers, teaching them how to keep themselves safe.

The staff undertake a range of training which is face to face and online. The training helps them understand how to keep the young people safe. Training includes radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and the risks associated with gang cultures. The young people do not go missing from campus. The staff know what to do should this event ever occur.

The approach to managing young people's safety around the site is effective. The young people participate in fire drill training that is over and above minimum expectations. Learning is taken from the evaluation of fire drills. Creative approaches to fire drills ensure that young people benefit from these practices.

Risk assessments are specific, and information is clear for staff to follow. There have been no incidents arising from the approach to managing risk. This means that young people can enjoy new and interesting experiences, while remaining safe.

Safer recruitment practices are very well established. The level of checks undertaken is extremely thorough, with all potential issues being explored with previous

employers. Records are very well organised, which means that governors and other auditors can readily scrutinise the arrangements for the recruitment of new staff. This adds to the efforts made by the college to safeguard young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders are very ambitious for the young people to achieve their maximum potential. They are positive role models and promote a culture where they celebrate diversity, empowering young people to be proud of who they are. Leaders support young people to promote deaf culture within the college and within the wider community. The college equality and diversity committee promotes tolerance and helps young people to understand other cultures and important equality issues.

Leaders work closely with education staff to monitor young people's progress in all areas of their life. They use a unique system to identify strengths and to target areas for development. This highly effective system ensures that young people continue to make excellent progress and it helps them to achieve their life goals.

Staff feel very well supported by the residential manager. The residential manager has high expectations of staff practice. The staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. These sessions allow staff to reflect on their work. When shortfalls in practice are highlighted, the residential manager carries out work with those staff to help to improve their performance. This means that young people receive excellent care and support from a staff team that performs consistently well.

Staff receive a range of training courses tailored to the young people's needs. All staff across the college, including catering staff and the maintenance team, are qualified in British Sign Language. Leaders take this a step further and ensure that students can communicate with everyone in their language. They provide this training to outside agencies where appropriate, such as the police officer who regularly works with the students.

Other training is relevant to the needs of young people. For example, mental health training has been a priority since the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic were eased. When staff need more complex information, experts are used, ensuring that staff become increasingly skilled, and they can meet the needs of the young people to a very high standard.

Leaders understand the strengths of the service. They are continually striving to make improvements for the young people and have focused areas for development. The leaders ensure that the student's voice is central to any plans. Leaders provide a variety of ways that young people can contribute their ideas, such as through the student committee. Leaders actively encourage the young people's comments. They take all requests seriously and are quick to make changes where they can.

The board of governors and the trustees have strong oversight of the residential provision. They are well informed of any safeguarding issues. Governors have changed their meeting structure to make sure that the young people's voice is

heard. A representative from the student committee attends governors' meetings. The direct input from students ensure that governors know what is important to young people. This way of running governors' meetings empowers young people and builds their confidence in presenting publicly. The young people are kept informed of governors' actions through plans. This way of working ensures that young people are fully involved in the running of the college.

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: SC008016

Principal/CEO: Alexis Johnson

Inspectors

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector

Jane Titley, Social Care Inspector

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