

Sparsholt College Hampshire

Sparsholt College, Sparsholt, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 2NF

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Sparsholt College is a specialist further education college providing education in land and environment. Accommodation for 16- to 18-year-old students is available in halls of residence on the campus. There are currently 199 residential students under the age of 18.

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 May 2022

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking into 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: 15 May 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

Residential students make exceptional progress in both their education and social skills while living on site. A social worker was highly positive about the progress one young person has made through being able to access their course by living in the halls of residence. Wardens know each student well and there are healthy and respectful relationships between students and staff. The residential areas have a convivial feel, with students joining in each other's games or socialising with their friends.

Students say they enjoy being on campus and are focused on achieving their career goals. Students were supported well during COVID-19 lockdown periods. They benefited from being in 'bubbles' as this meant that they spent time with students from a range of different courses rather than just their subject groups. This has had a long-lasting impact, in that students formed wider friendship networks across the college.

Residential students have varied opportunities to be actively involved in the development of the college. Students share their views and ideas in a variety of ways, such as in student surveys and by student representation at governors' meetings. Their views have resulted in changes such as later curfews, LGBTQ+ corner, neurodiverse club and craft club. This has provided safe spaces for students to relax and engage with peers. Students are consulted and their views are taken into account, for example, they can move accommodation during the term if they would prefer to be with their peers.

Planned moves from schools to the residential accommodation are bespoke to each student's needs. Staff identify students' additional support needs, such as learning disabilities and mental health needs, through pre-placement information and applications. The college closely liaises with the young person, their parents or carers and with other professionals supporting them. This includes emotional well-being specialists, to help prepare the young person for residential college. This means that there is a clear understanding of a student's needs and clear strategies to ensure they stay safe and can embrace student life. A social worker commented on how well a student had been helped to feel part of the college.

Students are supported well through an individualised planning approach. They have a variety of support systems available to them to help them succeed. All residential students attend their courses as planned. Cross-campus liaison is effective in a one-team approach to support students. Tutors work closely with care staff and support students with their studies in the evening. Joined-up working between the well-being team, wardens and progress coaches means residential students are seamlessly supported in their natural progression to employment and adulthood.

Residential students are taught how to lead healthy lifestyles. They are discouraged from smoking and encouraged to use the gym. A nurse and sexual health services are readily available in the college, alongside emotional well-being practitioners. There is strong communication with external professionals to identify any additional needs and how to best support young people. Staff are creative in finding ways to removing barriers for young people who want to move into the residential provision. Staff are trained to use medical equipment to support students with specific health needs. This ensures that those students have the same access to courses and extra-curricular activities as their peers.

There is a wide variety of healthy food choices for students and most of them enjoy the food. A small percentage of students were less positive about the food options available to them. The staff consult regularly with students to try to accommodate their menu suggestions. The catering staff know the students well and contribute to students' well-being through the positive relationships that they have with them.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Residential students say they feel safe on the campus. Students say they can approach wardens with any worries, and they have a variety of staff they can spend individual time with. Staff are attentive to students' needs and are aware of who has additional support needs. The communication across campus demonstrates that staff are attuned to students' needs and they work collaboratively to identify and address any concerns. The support provided by staff in the well-being centre is exemplary. Their move to a central location by the halls has increased the number of students reached and those self-referring. Drop-in sessions at the well-being centre cater for all, and meet the varying needs and identities of the students. Students value the well-being centre as a safe space to seek advice and guidance or to relax.

There is strong joint working with partner agencies. Staff reflect and learn when concerns arise to improve and develop safeguarding practice. All concerns are taken seriously and robust action is taken in response to concerns. The local authority designated officer says the college makes appropriate referrals and provides particularly clear records that demonstrate excellent knowledge of safeguarding. When students are at risk of self-injury, there are clear plans in place to support them well. Staff respond promptly to any new concerns and identify safety and support plans to ensure student welfare is promoted.

Safeguarding practice in relation to racism, bullying and sexual relationships is constantly evolving to respond to changes in accepted practice and students' views. Records of incidents are meticulous and clearly identify the actions that staff have taken to keep young people safe. Incidents of bullying are taken seriously and, in some instances, have resulted in the most severe warnings students can receive before permanent exclusions. Casual bullying is not tolerated as 'banter'. Extensive work on areas such as consent and diversity means that students are all well informed. Students reported that this has also opened a healthy debate about respecting each other and the safety of students across campus.

Students understand the behavioural expectations in the residential provision and know the consequences of not meeting them. The student guide and conduct policy are comprehensive and students are held accountable for their actions. The zero-tolerance approach to drugs is embraced by students, recognising the impact it could have on their future employment. The use of breathalysers and drug wipes act as a further deterrent ensuring that the importance of health, safety and wellbeing is always upheld, particularly important on a campus which delivers hazardous activities as part of the curriculum.

Students are protected from avoidable risks through a meticulous approach to health and safety, especially given some of the high-risk activities, such as shooting, or working with heavy machinery or dangerous animals. Staff recruitment practice is rigorous in its approach to safeguarding, including how gaps in employment are verified and authenticated.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

There have been wholesale changes to the senior leadership team since the last inspection. These have only helped to strengthen the quality and experiences for residential students and across the campus. The team is highly aspirational and ambitious for students' progress and outcomes. Leaders have also made improvements to the quality of accommodation and the range of extra-curricular activities. The leadership team has re-invigorated the staff team and has been successful in introducing new ideas and initiatives. This has helped staff to focus attention on responding to lower level safeguarding concerns and to improve the culture of safeguarding in the residential service.

Residential wardens are supported effectively by an experienced management team who strive for the highest-quality experiences for students. There is an emphasis on ensuring that students are industry-ready when they leave college. This means that students are successful in obtaining and sustaining employment when they leave the college. It is recognised that because of the COVID-19 lockdown period some students missed school and this has had an adverse impact in terms of their social development. Staff are aware of this and work together to help students to catch up and develop both educationally and emotionally.

Staff performance is regularly evaluated and development paths are clear. Staff undertake the training that they need to meet students' needs. The prospectus for residential students is informative and reflective of the student experience.

A variety of tools are used to measure students' progress and individual support plans aid students' continued learning and development. Leaders are clear on the strengths and areas for development of the service. They have a comprehensive service development plan in place and clear action plans to implement continual 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: SC061177

Principal/CEO: Julie Milburn

Inspectors

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

Sarah Olliver, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022