

Hartpury College

Hartpury College, Hartpury House, Hartpury, Gloucester GL19 3BE

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

This is a further education college situated in Hartpury, Gloucestershire. The college offers a diverse range of academic, vocational and land-based courses, including sport, agriculture, and animal and equine management. There are 707 residential students. At the time of this inspection, there were 701 residential students aged between 16 and 18 years.

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 November 2022

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account requires improvement to be good

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

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: 4 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

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

Students have limited opportunities to form trusting relationships with the adults who care for them in the evenings and at night because staffing levels are low. There are a number of teaching and support staff who live on site, who are well known to students. In addition, a responsive on call system is in place, but the number of dedicated evening/night staff is low in relation to the needs and number of students. This inevitably makes it harder for students to spend time with these staff. Some students say that the support they receive in the evenings and overnight is sufficient, others say that they do not see the evening staff team. In contrast, there have been some positive developments in the support given to students during daytime hours. The college offers a wide a range of support to students, including physical, mental and sexual health advice that is delivered by well-trained and skilful staff. These staff are centrally situated in the hub that is accessible to and well used by students. Students also benefit from the oversight of a well-being team, which includes registered nurses and a mental health nurse. They attend small social groups with a focus on well-being, and some receive enhanced support in addition to this.

The use of surveillance cameras in communal areas of the residential accommodation and of body cameras by residential staff is intrusive and fails to respect and protect the privacy of students. Following this inspection, the use of body cameras has ceased and some, but not all CCTV has been removed from inside of the residential buildings.

Students' rooms are generally clean and comfortable, although some students sleep in bunkbeds that are too small for them. One communal area, the central common room (Heros), is spacious, well decorated and provides ample space for games, not all communal accommodation is of this standard.

A new college restaurant has been built since the previous inspection. Considerable investment has been made in a new state of the art college restaurant. This has been built since the previous inspection and offers students a coffee shop and food court. The food is fresh and plentiful. However, the two-week rolling menu is repetitive and, as a result, students are dissatisfied.

Students say that the college ensures that they are well informed and prepared for residential life before they move in. New students are also helped to settle in well by more-established students through a system of peer support. A designated team helps overseas students to settle in well. Ongoing keeping-in-touch meetings with these students help them to adjust to college life in a new country.

Most students told inspectors that they like living at Hartpury. They also value the opportunity to make friends from different walks of life and cultures.

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

Students say that they are well supported during the daytime and say that they feel safe on campus. However, just three, or up to four, residential staff are responsible for the supervision of the 707 students in the evenings and overnight. An effective on call system is in place. After curfew, there is no adult supervision in the accommodation blocks. As a result of this limited staffing, the team cannot always respond well to concerning incidents. For example, when attending the accident and emergency department, and in-line with college policy, there have been times when students have been dropped off and left without adult support at this potentially worrying time for them.

Surveillance is being used as means to gather evidence when incidents occur. CCTV is used extensively throughout the communal areas of the residential accommodation blocks. For example, one accommodation block has 12 cameras in the corridors, and two other accommodation blocks both have eight cameras in their corridors. In one accommodation block, the CCTV points at the entrance to the girls' bathroom, (this was removed following this inspection). CCTV is not constantly monitored to prevent potential safeguarding incidents but is looked at retrospectively to examine any incidents that have been raised with staff and captured on CCTV. As a result, there is no preventative element. Residential staff wear body cameras. These capture the staff's interactions with students. All students sign consent to the use of CCTV and body-worn cameras as part of the application process. However, some students said that they were not aware of the use of either CCTV or body-worn cameras. Residential staff have individual discretion about what footage to record and upload, and management oversight of this is limited. This raises concerns about how potentially sensitive footage is handled. The use of body worn cameras ceased following this inspection.

Inevitably, this large college deals with a number of safeguarding matters and generally deals well with these. However, when safeguarding concerns are raised, comprehensive information is not always recorded in one place. Important information is stored in a variety of places, such as student or staff records. The lack of a centralised system means that there is scope for concerning events to be overlooked.

A well-trained team works during the day to support students when incidents of sexual violence have been alleged. This designated staff team has a good understanding of their role and responsibility, and their effectiveness is further strengthened by relevant external training. In contrast, the training received by the residential night team is relatively basic.

The college has a consistent and effective approach to promoting good behaviour and, outside of the issue of low staffing ratios in the evening and at night-time, a generally appropriate approach to tackling more-problematic behaviour is in place. When students are excluded, there is clear record of the reason for this.

Safer recruitment processes are largely followed. However, there is a lack of clarity in the records about how interviewers are satisfied that individuals who are offered a position have the right skills and experiences to meet residential students' needs. This aspect was addressed during the inspection, the form for gathering the relevant information was amended.

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

Leaders and managers are responsive and proactive. During this inspection, they were quick to acknowledge and respond to some of the shortfalls identified.

Leaders and managers have proactively developed effective working relationships with relevant partner agencies to broaden the range of support services available to students. This has strengthened the care provided to students during the day. However, the level of support and adult supervision received by students in the evenings and overnight falls some way below this standard. The challenge that low staffing ratios poses for the quality of care in the evening and at night-time, and the infringement of students' right to privacy through the disproportionate use of surveillance technology, are concerns that have not been sufficiently identified and tackled by leaders and managers.

Residential support staff do not have their practice reviewed. As a result, they are not provided with formal or structured opportunities to reflect on and develop their approach to their work with students. During this inspection, leaders and managers took action to secure team and individual supervision sessions for residential staff from an external agency.

All residential staff have completed an induction programme and basic training, and have their performance appraised annually. However, none of the residential staff have a recognised qualification in the care of children and young people. Furthermore, residential staff are not provided with access to all relevant specialist training courses. This includes dedicated training in relation to county lines, gangs, the criminal and sexual exploitation of children and young people, female genital mutilation, and self-harm. This means that staff are not provided with all the training they need to meet the students' current needs. Work is currently being undertaken to develop an accredited training programme to professionalise residential staff.

Leaders have taken steps to further strengthen the college culture in a way that better meets the needs of students, particularly the most vulnerable. Changes such as no longer referring to residential support workers as 'wardens;' which could be perceived as negative, when it is a role related to the support and care of young people, have helped in this respect. This progress is positive, but leaders do recognise that there remains more to do to help build consistent, trusting relationships between all students and staff. The low staffing levels during the evening and night-time and heavy use of surveillance technology are likely to act as a brake in achieving the pace of progress that leaders aspire to.

Regular residential team meetings take place. These provide a successful forum for providing process and policy information to staff. New communication systems are discussed, as are security concerns. However, concerns about students' welfare, reflective practice or improving practice are not included in these meetings. This is a missed opportunity.

Governors demonstrate enthusiasm for their roles. They have a good understanding of statutory updates about keeping children safe in education and tackling sexual violence and harassment. Students are meaningfully represented at board level and are involved in some important work and future plans, such as the sexual misconduct forum. This engagement of students is a positive development that is helping to shape policy and practice at the college.

What does the college need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for residential students. In particular, ensure that bunk beds are not too small for some students. (Further education residential accommodation: national minimum standards page 8, paragraph 5.1)
- Any use of surveillance equipment (e.g. CCTV cameras) or patrolling of buildings or grounds for security purposes does not intrude unreasonably on residents' privacy, is known to students and their parents, and is compliant with legislative requirements / restrictions. Ensure that students are safeguarded and their right to privacy protected. (Further education residential accommodation: national minimum standards page 9, paragraph 5.8)
- Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with residential students has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in residence when newly appointed, and receives regular reviews of their residential practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in relation to residence. In particular, ensure that residential support workers receive the relevant training to meet the students' current needs. (Further education residential accommodation: national minimum standards page 15, paragraph 15.1)
- The staff supervising residential students outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of residential students, and the locations and activities involved. In particular review the staffing arrangements in the evenings and overnight to ensure satisfactory arrangements in line with this national minimum standard (Further education residential accommodation: national minimum standards page 15, paragraph 15.4)
- Appendix 2 - List of records
The following records are required, but this list represents the minimum rather than an exhaustive list: child protection allegations or concerns. In particular, ensure that safeguarding and concern records are easily accessible and audited regularly. (Further education residential accommodation: national minimum standards page 21, Appendix 2, point 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: SC046577

Principal/CEO: Professor Andrew Collop

Inspectors

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Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector

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