

Askham Bryan College

Askham Bryan College, Askham Bryan, York YO23 3FR

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Askham Bryan College is a specialist land-based college with five centres across the north of England. The residential campus at York offers accommodation to 196 students aged 16 and 17 years, as well as those over 18 years of age. The residential manager is an experienced warden. She has been in the manager's role for one year and has a relevant leadership qualification.

The site covers more than 254 hectares and includes a wildlife and conservation park, equestrian centre, engineering workshops, farm and agri-tech centre. There is a range of student facilities, including a sports hall, student bar, gym, digital academy, and a learning resource centre.

Students stay in one of several catered accommodation blocks. These are separated by age and gender and have ensuite or shared facilities.

The college offers further education and higher education courses. These include apprenticeships, diplomas and degree-level qualifications. Courses available include agriculture, animal management, arboriculture, countryside and the environment, engineering, equine studies, horticulture, motor sport, and uniformed public services.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision for students aged 16 to 17 years at this further education college.

Inspection dates: 31 January to 2 February 2023

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: 28 January 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

Students thoroughly enjoy living in college accommodation. They value the increased independence that they get from learning to live away from home. Over time, they become confident in taking responsibility for themselves. This helps them when they are planning their options following college. Students make friends on campus and enjoy their freedom to socialise. They develop excellent relationships with wardens, who they get to know very well. Students feel that staying in accommodation enhances their college experience, a view that is shared by their parents.

Student's emotional health and well-being are exceptionally well supported. Staff recognise that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are far-reaching. In particular, there has been an increase in mental health difficulties for a significant number of students. In response to pressure on specialist services, the well-being team has been expanded. Some well-being staff have completed training to respond to issues such as eating disorders. This approach means that staff can provide timely, targeted support to more students. As a result, most students can remain in college even when their difficulties are significant. This is having a remarkable effect on their immediate lives and their longer-term opportunities.

Students make excellent progress with their studies, regardless of their previous experiences of education. Staff quickly identify barriers to learning. They make exceptional efforts to keep Students in college, including when difficulties involve safeguarding concerns. Some students experience educational success for the first time. This is indispensable to their overall progress, including their self-esteem.

Students benefit from the wealth of exciting learning activities that are available. For example, students can do work experience abroad, including in the Caribbean and Scandinavia. These are fascinating additions to student's education. These opportunities help students to develop their personal and social skills as well as their employment potential.

Staff help students to settle quickly into their college lives. During the first weeks of term, wardens organise enrichment activities to help build relationships between students. Wardens are highly skilled at recognising when students are missing home. They offer individualised support to any students who are struggling. As a result of this well-coordinated approach, most students begin to enjoy college quickly.

The accommodation for students is appropriate to their needs. Rooms are warm, well-maintained and contain all the necessities that students require. Some students would like to extend the existing opportunity to cook their own meals. This would help with constraints linked to the cost-of-living crisis. Others would like additional

areas to mix with friends, away from the on-site canteen. Leaders understand these views and are looking for creative solutions that meet student's needs.

Students have different ways to provide their wishes and feelings to staff. In response to student's requests, leaders implemented QR codes to gather feedback. These systems enable students to comment on topics such as food, activities, accommodation, or personal concerns. Students readily use this form of communication. They also attend student voice meetings and take part in college-wide surveys, some of which are led by external organisations. These different methods of providing their views help students to feel invested in their college experience.

Students enjoy a range of activities during the evenings and at weekends. The student activity coordinator talks to students about what they want to do. Activities are both on and off site. They include options that are appealing to more-introverted students. Student-led events are proving very popular and are being developed. These opportunities are giving all students the chance to relax and socialise safely.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Staff understand individual student's risks. Bespoke packages of support help to reduce the likelihood of harm. For example, staff carry out regular checks of students who are at risk of isolation. Students know that staff will do this, as they take part in the planning to reduce risk. Involving students in their own risk management means that strategies are likely to be successful. As a result, the number of serious incidents is very low.

Substance misuse is not allowed. Students generally respond positively to consistent messages about the harm from underage drinking and drug use. Staff are knowledgeable about such behaviour and are vigilant about recognising indications of concern. If students use substances, consequences focus on support rather than punishment. Whenever possible, students are not excluded from college. Staff decision-making in relation to such incidents is underpinned by trauma-informed practice. This focuses on education, providing positive experiences and improving student's self-esteem. This approach is extremely successful. Students recognise the value of the help that they receive, and the occurrence of further concerns is low. This approach makes an exceptional difference to some students, who are able to remain in college and take advantage of the experiences on offer.

Students feel safe in college. They know that they can call for support from wardens, regardless of the time of day. At night, walkways are well lit, CCTV is in operation, and there is additional support from a dedicated security team. Students know that these arrangements work well. This helps them to feel relaxed and able to enjoy their time in college.

Students undertake important learning about risks in the community. Dedicated safety weeks take place at the beginning of the academic year. These include visits from external groups, who use creative methods to convey the reality of potential

dangers. For example, a team from the police presented information about road safety. Other experts talk about river safety and risks from substance misuse. These topics are highly relevant to students who are living away from home for the first time. Student's safety increases while their independence continues to be promoted. These opportunities capture student's attention and help to reinforce other learning.

Arrangements for the recruitment of new staff are effective. Some processes have been improved since the last inspection. All checks and references are undertaken, and staff do not work with students until a clear Disclosure and Barring Service check is received. However, the verification of some references is not clearly set out. Leaders accept this and new ways of recording information are being developed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The accommodation is led by a very skilled, energetic residential manager. She is deeply committed to helping all students to achieve, including those who struggle to settle into college life. She has high expectations for all students. She ensures that their individual needs are taken into consideration and that plans are in place to help them to meet their potential. Students recognise her skills and respond extremely well to her approach.

The residential manager is well supported by other leaders in the college. They work as a team to ensure that students receive the support that they need to progress socially and academically. Leaders are driven to ensure that the college is achieving its goals. They know the college's strengths and have focused action plans to ensure that it continues to develop.

Staff are extremely well supported by the residential manager. They speak very highly about the impact of her taking on this new role. The residential manager has strengthened the warden team, making it even more responsive to student's needs. Staff have regular reflective meetings with the residential manager, where they discuss their own development as well as student's progress and well-being. Wardens who are new to the role have an excellent induction into what is expected of them. They have a wide range of training that they must complete in their first year. This means that wardens quickly amass the knowledge and skills to provide the right level of support to each student.

Leaders forge strong connections with staff in other establishments. For example, leaders work closely with mental health professionals, social workers, and other support services. These links help to inform and improve the work of college safeguarding and well-being staff. As a result, students receive timely and creative solutions when they experience difficulties.

The college is supported by a very strong governing body. Governors have relevant experience and skills, augmented by appropriate training. This enhances the support and challenge that they provide to the senior leadership team. A student governor is adding value to the governing body. A great deal of thought has gone into ensuring that this role is effective. Governors have an extremely detailed knowledge of the

issues that affect students in college and elsewhere. This, combined with governors' involvement in strategic developments, means that leaders can rely on the governing body to be consistently effective.

Leaders ensure that inclusivity is at the heart of student's college experience. Equality and diversity feature in all policies and are a standing item in governors' meetings. Staff receive training on trans-awareness issues and there is an active LGBTQ+ community in college. Outcomes for students who are looked after by the local authority are particularly good. Remarkable levels of support are provided to students who have experienced trauma or disadvantages. This means that those students with the greatest needs receive the support that they require to meet their potential.

What does the college need to do to improve?

Points for improvement

- Leaders should ensure that residential students have access to a range and choice of areas that enable them to socialise, including the possibility of making simple meals together. (Further education colleges with residential provision: national minimum standards, page 11, paragraph 10.2)
- Leaders should ensure that colleges adopt recruitment procedures in line with any guidance issued by the Secretary of State, to include specific reference to the verification of references. (Further education colleges with residential provision: national minimum standards, page 14, paragraph 14.1)

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: SC040955

Principal/CEO: Dr Tim Whitaker

Inspectors

Jane Titley, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector

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