

Exeter College

Exeter College, Hele Road, Exeter, Devon EX4 4JS

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Exeter College provides further education for 16- to 18-year-old learners, including apprenticeships, A levels and the International Baccalaureate, as well as courses for 14- to 16-year-olds, higher education and adult courses, community education and professional development courses.

Residential accommodation is provided for learners who are unable to travel into college each day. Accommodation is provided with host families for overseas learners and in local student accommodation for learners enrolled in Exeter Chiefs Rugby Academy.

At the time of the inspection, 11 students were living in the residential accommodation. Six students under the age of 18 were living with host families.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 March 2023

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

How well young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 9 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: good

Students really enjoy their boarding experience. They said that they feel safe, meet new friends and enjoy their academic courses. The head of care describes the students' attitude and behaviour as exemplary. There have not been any reported concerns relating to bullying, and the relationships between students are respectful and kind. Students said that staff listen to them and value their opinions, views and ideas. Students have developed strong relationships with the staff and spoke highly of the support, guidance and advice they receive from them.

Students' aspirations are prioritised. As a result of their time at this College, many students secure placements at universities of their choice, and some secure a full-time contract with the Exeter Chiefs Rugby club.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is an effective induction process to welcome, reassure and inform students of the boarding and host family provisions. The boarding handbook is an informative and detailed guide. Students said that the induction process was helpful and provided them with the reassurance they needed.

The quality of the accommodation for students is, in the main, good. Students say that they like their bedrooms and spend time in the communal areas most evenings. However, some parts of the accommodation are showing signs of wear and tear, and the use of surveillance cameras located in the lounge and kitchen have the potential to intrude on students' privacy. Although not an issue this year, leaders and managers agreed to continue to review the mixed gender living arrangements. In addition, they confirmed a redecoration and maintenance programme has been agreed and they will review the use of surveillance cameras.

Students who stay in the residential provision develop practical independence skills, self-reliance and social skills, which increase their confidence and self-esteem. One parent said that staying in residence, 'has given my children 'wings' and has taught them independence.' Opportunities for students to develop their cooking skills are plentiful. Students enjoy a broad range of cooking and dining experiences. These include 'Come dine with me' experiences and being invited to dine at one of the college's restaurants.

Students, residential staff and home-stay families are regularly consulted with and their views are an integral part of the college. Feedback gained is analysed, considered and acted on. The student voice is well established through regular surveys, discussions and a broad range of student voice forums. One of the college's strengths is how well tutors, the well-being team and residential staff work together. This provides students with a wraparound support package.

How well young people are helped and protected: good

The students' safety is central to the ethos of the college. Residential students told the inspectors that they feel safe, they trust the staff and know who they can speak with if they have concerns. Residential staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding protocols. Their knowledge is underpinned by regular training. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and safeguarding team maintain effective working relationships with safeguarding agencies.

Safeguarding incidents at the boarding provision are rare. When they do occur, for example when a student makes an allegation, the response from the residential staff and the safeguarding team is swift and appropriate. However, the inspectors found that some records did not reflect all the actions taken by the DSL and supporting departments. Information is not always recorded in one place. In addition, when internal investigations take place, records do not provide sufficient information detailing how the investigating officer has reached the outcome that supports the actions taken.

Residential staff have a thorough understanding of students' individual needs and their known risks. Residential staff work with the students to develop their understanding of risk and develop strategies to keep themselves safe. Basic risk assessments provide residential staff with information they need to respond to known risks. Leaders and managers agreed there is a need to develop a residential care support plan for one student who has an education, health and care plan.

The college has high expectations of students. The student handbook provides students with good guidance on the college's expectations of good and safe behaviour. Students say they feel that these expectations are fair and reasonable. Since the last inspection, there have been a small number of incidents of the students not adhering to the college rules. Appropriate action was taken in response.

Residential staff are recruited safely and in accordance with statutory guidance. In addition, appropriate safeguarding checks are conducted on home-stay families and the accommodation they provide.

The safety of the environment is well maintained. Environmental health and safety checks are regularly completed. Fire evacuations take place regularly. However, records of fire safety checks and evacuations do not detail essential information, for example, which residential staff have taken part in a fire evacuation drill.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders, managers and staff all have an ambitious vision for the progress and safety and well-being of the residential students. As a result, the residential students are making impressive progress. Students have access to a vast range of learning opportunities and are supported by a skilled and enthusiastic residential and well-being team.

Leaders and managers have proactively developed and maintained effective working relationships with relevant partner agencies. This broadens the availability of a range of support services for students. Students have access to a youth intervention officer on site two days a week. Good and effective communication is maintained between the residential staff and students' tutors. This collaborative working is one of the college's strengths.

The staff told inspectors that they enjoy their work, and they feel respected and valued. They have respect for and appreciate the leaders' and managers' support and guidance. The staff confidently shared examples of the positive outcomes that residential students have achieved because of their residential experiences.

Leaders and managers ensure that residential staff receive regular mandatory training and specialist training to meet their roles and the needs of the students. Staff receive effective one-to-one support that ensures they reflect on their practice. However, there are no opportunities for the residential staff to meet as a team. This means the staff are not collectively sharing best practice or learning from each other.

Leaders and managers have a detailed understanding of the progress that students make from their starting points. The electronic information management system provides governors, senior leaders, managers and department heads with a comprehensive overview of each student's needs, engagement and progress.

Leaders and managers demonstrated an impressive understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Despite this, their ambition, vision and determination to provide the best residential experience for students is not included in the residential development plan.

Most parents provided feedback about their child's residential experience. Parents are unanimously positive about the residential provision. They confirmed that they are reassured their child is safe and well cared for. They have confidence in the head of care and residential staff because their child is provided with warm and nurturing care and support. They confirmed that communication from the residential staff is regular and of a good quality and that they enjoy receiving regular newsletters.

What does the college need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- 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. (NMS 5.8)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the college and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.8)

Points for improvement

- College leaders should continue to keep the mixed gender living arrangements under regular review.
- College leaders should consider providing opportunities for the residential staff to meet together regularly as a team.

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: 1274769

Principal/CEO: John Laramy

Inspectors

Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector

David Kidner, Social Care Inspector

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