

Grantham College

Stonebridge Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 9AP

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Grantham College is situated in the market town of Grantham, Lincolnshire. The college provides further, higher and adult education courses. Residential accommodation for young people who are under 18 consists of 49 en-suite bedrooms in purpose-built accommodation.

At the time of this inspection, 15 young people under 18 years old were resident.

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 October 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: 19 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

Young people who stay at the residential provision at this college receive excellent care and support. This is provided by a compassionate, committed, and caring team of accommodation support staff (wardens). Staff go above and beyond expectations in supporting the young people. A particular strength of the college is the positive relationships that residential staff have developed with the young people. They are attentive to young people's needs and recognise when additional support may be required and act immediately to provide this support. This ensures that young people are provided with every opportunity to thrive at college.

Staff in the residential provision work collaboratively with other college staff, such as learning mentors, tutors, and private-sector apprenticeship providers. The staff intervene early should the young people experience any difficulties and ensure that all professionals work in an agreed direction to give young people the support they need. This helps young people to achieve their goals.

Communication with professionals across the college site, families of young people and external professionals is excellent. The residential staff maintain regular contact with private external employers who provide apprenticeships and with families to share information that helps ensure that young people are safe and receiving the help and support they need. Feedback obtained from external private-sector employers highlighted the positive experiences that students have at the college, with residential staff providing young people with excellent support.

Young people who are new to the college and the residential provision receive a high level of support to make, what is for many, a big life change in leaving home. Leaders and residential staff make sure this move is well organised, with young people benefiting from a structured and comprehensive induction. The young people and their views are central in this induction, and it is adapted to meet any specific needs they may have. Leaders and staff have a good understanding of young people's needs prior to them joining the residential accommodation because of the rigorous application process. This means they can understand and be ready to meet young people's needs and help them to quickly settle into their respective courses. The residential staff are quick to adapt plans in response to any additional support needs young people may have.

The staff are caring and highly motivated to provide the best possible support to young people. Staff spend time with the young people and get to know them very well, including how best to help and support their development. Staff spoken to were positive and said, 'We are a family.' This ethos is integral throughout the residential provision. There is a strong sense of community within the college and a genuine warmth and wanting to support each other.

Young people can take part in several different activities. These range from organised monthly events in the residential provision to activities in the local area, such as attending the gym, bowling or going out to eat and socialise with friends.

The young people said that they enjoy staying in the residence and college life more broadly. Many young people choose to remain at the college to continue their studies into higher education. This demonstrates the quality of relationships and support that young people receive, value and benefit from.

The residential accommodation is very well maintained and is clean and well decorated. The communal areas and some en-suite bathrooms have benefited from an upgrade. Regular health and safety and fire checks mean students are provided with a safe environment to enjoy.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Young people staying in the residential provision feel safe. They have positive and trusting relationships with the staff who support them, and this is fundamental to their feeling of being safe. Young people feel that they can talk to and confide in staff across the college should they need to. Any incidents of concern are extremely rare. There have been no reported incidents of bullying or young people going missing from the residential provision or concerns with exploitation or allegations against staff. The residential provision has remained settled. This provides an environment that helps young people to achieve their aims.

When incidents have occurred, college staff have acted immediately. They have worked effectively with external agencies to ensure that young people are safeguarded, and risks are reduced. Young people are provided with clear and consistent behaviour boundaries, which contributes to their sense of security and well-being.

There are detailed safeguarding policies that cover a range of risk factors, such as going missing and exploitation. These are reviewed regularly, updated and shared with the staff team. This provides the staff with clear guidance on how to manage safeguarding incidents, if they occurred. Additional training has been provided to further develop staff's knowledge and understanding. The college has good links with local police, who provide additional information around local issues that may impact on young people.

Young people have access to excellent resources to support them with their emotional and mental health, and they have easy access to help and advice. This is delivered in a variety of ways, which supports inclusivity and accessibility for young people. The college mental health team provides regular opportunities for young people to get together and discuss their mental health. This overcomes barriers and the information available to young people means that early help and support are readily available. The mental health team is also part of the college safeguarding team and attends regular meetings to share relevant information and identify where additional support may be needed.

Residential staff are very proactive in monitoring the whereabouts of young people. When young people want to go out, there are clear and robust procedures for staff to monitor when they have left and where they are going. Staff keep in contact with them and, if they have any concerns, staff act immediately to locate young people and ensure that they are safe. This approach keeps young people safe and helps to instil in them the importance of always keeping staff informed of their whereabouts.

The processes for recruiting new staff are strong. All relevant checks are completed on prospective new staff prior to them working with young people. The leaders and managers undertaking recruitment have all received training in safer recruitment practice. The staff in residence regularly renew their enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks, which is good practice. There have been no allegations against staff but there is a detailed policy and process in place should this occur.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers have remained consistent, both as a leadership team and in their approach and ethos in the residential provision. This has provided stability, cohesion and direction. There has been a steady progression and development of the residential provision since the last full inspection in November 2019. Leaders and managers lead by example, and they have high aspirations for young people and staff who work in the residential provision.

Leaders and managers are reflective and have developed their approach to the residential provision over time. They have implemented changes and sustained these changes, which has benefited young people and staff. They know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the residential provision and this has led to an excellent development plan. This has been instrumental in driving improvements. The plan remains under regular review and will support ongoing development of the residential provision.

Governance arrangements are strong. Governors provide the required levels of support and challenge to leaders. There is a designated link governor for the residential provision, and she is a regular visitor to the accommodation. She speaks to the young people and staff and seeks their opinions. The link governor questions and interrogates information and will act as an advocate for young people and the residential provision, if required. Minutes of governors' meetings are good and always contain an overview of the residential provision and safeguarding young people.

There are a wide range of policies and guidance available to the staff in the residential provision. Policies are detailed and have the required clarity to help and guide staff in undertaking their work. Policies undergo regular review and are amended as required. Leaders and managers undertake regular risk assessments, when required, to ensure that activities and events are assessed and safe for young people.

Young people moving from abroad to study and stay at the college and their families benefit from the support and excellent communication. Staff have gone above expectations in supporting families and providing information and reassurance to young people living at a considerable distance from home. For example, residential staff arranged for a parent to stay at the college and spend time in the local area as part of the student's induction into the college. Support was given to open a bank account for the student and in accessing local resources. This helped provide assurance to the family of the care and support that the student would receive.

Team meetings are undertaken regularly, and this helps residential staff to raise any concerns they may have. Discussions around young people and safeguarding are a priority in these meetings. Staff work as a team to provide good approaches to care and support for young people. There is excellent communication throughout the team, and the team is proactive in working with other agencies and staff in accessing additional support for young people if needed.

Staff have access to a wide range of mandatory and additional training to further develop their knowledge and skills. Leaders and managers have utilised external resources to provide additional training around current concerns and issues that may impact on students. For example, additional training has been scheduled around county lines and the impact of vaping on young people.

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: SC039105

Principal/CEO: Paul Deane

Inspectors

Phillip Morris, Social Care Regulatory Inspection Manager
Sarah Orriss, Social Care Inspector

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