

Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College

Folly Lane, Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 1LS

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College delivers vocational and academic education and training to young people and adults. The college operates from five main campuses, in Hereford, Oswestry, Walford, Holme Lacy and Ludlow, as well as through County Training, a training provider based in Shropshire.

There are around 2,134 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 300 full-time adult students studying at Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College. North Shropshire College (Oswestry) and Walford College account for 23% of the full-time learners. The college provides residential accommodation at Walford College only, with residents studying at either the Oswestry or Walford campuses. At the time of inspection, there were 13 students aged under 18 living on the Walford campus.

The college appointed the residential manager in the summer term of 2023 and she started work in September 2023.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 March 2024

Overall experiences and progress of young people , taking in account	good
How well young people are helped and protected	outstanding
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good

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

Date of last inspection: 20 May 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: good

Students enjoy their time staying in the residential accommodation and they make some exceptional progress academically and in their social skills and overall confidence.

Students said that living on campus is like being part of a family and they enjoy spending time together and looking out for each other. One student said, 'It's great. The staff are amazing and very caring and always ask if you're okay and if you have an issue they are always there to listen and help you.' Parents value the support provided by the staff, who they say are friendly and approachable. One parent said that staying in halls has been the making of her daughter and another said that her child now has the confidence to manage most social situations.

As the student group is small, staff know the students well and can respond quickly to their requests and provide individual and tailored responses to their many and varied needs.

The college has an ongoing refurbishment programme. The larger residential accommodation, Caradoc, provides excellent-quality accommodation with spacious rooms, queen-size beds and en-suite bathrooms. Students find the accommodation safe and comfortable.

The smaller accommodation, Wrekin, looks dated, with smaller rooms and no en-suite bathrooms. There are plans to refurbish this accommodation. Some students said that they still liked the smaller accommodation as it was quiet. Work has started to refurbish two older accommodation blocks with the aim of bringing them into use next term.

The students have access to the club room which includes a large kitchen where they can cook and enjoy meals together. The club provides a communal social area where staff are based in the evenings and are accessible to students. Students value the easy access to staff and knowing that there is always someone available to help them with any matter, however small.

The flexible catering arrangements mean that students have a range of options to choose from, including preparing their own meals in the residential accommodation or the communal kitchen, going out for meals or buying meals from the canteen. The quality of the food in the canteen varies, with most students saying that they preferred the breakfast and lunchtime offer, especially the 'breakfast wrap'. The quality of the teatime meals is not consistent and not as popular with the students, and many make alternative arrangements in the evening.

Residential students enjoy living in the residential accommodation and make good progress in their college studies and in developing their independence and social

skills. In the last academic year, the residential students outperformed the day students in their attendance, retention levels and results, with many passing with merits and distinctions. Most students returned this September to carry on their studies at the next level. Most students in their first year said they planned to return in September 2024 to carry on their studies and would continue to stay in the residential accommodation.

All students who require additional support receive this through a range of services provided by the college, including support from student support assistants and access to additional practical sessions. Students who stay in the residential accommodation can access additional support from residential staff who are on site. Staff help with revision, theory and practical sessions in the evenings and during the day when they are not in formal lessons. The overall grades and performance indicators confirm that because residential students develop independence skills, increase their social skills, and receive extra practical support many make progress more rapidly than they would have done had they only attended college by day.

Students are offered a range of opportunities to have a say in the running of the residential accommodation, through surveys, forms, a suggestion box and student forum. Recent changes have included adding toasted sandwiches to the teatime menu and having more cleaning products available in the kitchens. Students are confident that staff would deal with any concerns, however insignificant, quickly, and effectively and feel that their views are considered.

Staff complete an individual development residential plan (IRDP) for each student, which sets out their targets for the academic year. Although the IRDPs set out targets for each student, most are similar. It is not clear what the student should do to meet the targets and when they are marked as complete, how they have achieved this. There is no overall structured programme of activity to help students meet their targets, which is a lost opportunity.

At present, the IRDP is a separate document and is not stored with the significant amount of data and information that the college holds about each student and their needs, performance, and progression. Plans are in hand to move all student information into one electronic area. Including IRDPs would mean they could be linked to all the other information held about students, could be shared with other professionals involved with students and have greater value.

The college provides a flexible activity offer. However, because it tries to provide activities to meet students' many and varied interests and needs, the offer lacks structure and take-up is low. This makes it more difficult for staff to plan effectively. The students do not feel the college offers enough off-site activities. This is partly due to a shortage of minibuses. The college has plans to increase the number of drivers and vehicles available, including buying a vehicle which any staff member can drive.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

The arrangements for safeguarding students are excellent. The safeguarding managers are knowledgeable and passionate about keeping students safe and have developed policies and systems to quickly identify students at risk and take swift and appropriate action. They are members of professional networks across the relevant local authorities and across all the college campuses so no matter where a student is they will receive the same level of response. Students said that they consider the college to be a safe place and that staff will always help them.

In recognition of the increasing challenges facing students, the college developed its mental health strategy and implemented this in 2021 to support and develop the mental, emotional, social and physical well-being of students and staff. This is delivered by the well-resourced well-being team. The overall strategy, which is led by the head of student services and designated safeguarding lead, is understood and supported by the governing body and senior leadership team.

The team supports students from the time they apply to the college through to their transition to their next stage of their life or academic journey. The offer, which also extends to staff, includes access to support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through the health assured programme, and individual mentoring programmes, drop-ins and additional training support packages. There are appropriate measures in place to manage risk and students who present with the highest risk are known to senior managers.

The impact of this work is shown in the progress many students have made in understanding their feelings better, recognising when they are becoming angry and taking a different course of action, or helping with anxiety and loneliness.

The college has a comprehensive signing-out system in place, including the use of key fobs and CCTV systems to enhance student safety and monitor absence in a highly effective way. Students comply with the system and staff always know where the students are. This reassures students that, should anything happen to them, staff would know to look for them.

Students behave well and understand the rules. The college takes effective action when rules are broken. No student has gone missing from the site and there is no use of restraint or restrictive practice.

Effective arrangements are in place to detect and prevent inappropriate internet access and this is monitored through meetings led by senior managers. These systems prevent access to unsuitable websites and social media platforms. Quick and effective action is taken when inappropriate or unsafe activity is identified.

Governors receive training and regular updates on safeguarding and are aware of the safeguarding challenges faced by the college and the students. They are

represented across a range of related groups and committees and demonstrate a keen interest in the welfare of students, staff and the senior leadership team.

The college recruits staff safely. Regular audits by governors and an external agency ensure that recruitment arrangements are conducted safely and in line with statutory guidance. The college requires all staff to join the Disclosure and Barring Service update service or renew their certificate every three years.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Governors have a good grasp of the challenges faced by the college and its successes and a keen interest in the development of the residential provision. Governors receive regular reports and visit the accommodation during their learning walks. They recognise that the students who stay in the accommodation do well.

The residential accommodation manager has almost completed her level 4 qualification. She is ably supported in her role by the campus manager and vice principal, who are based on site.

Students value the support they receive from the manager and staff, who they describe as approachable and supportive. The manager and staff have created a safe and welcoming environment for all students.

If a student is struggling in any area of their lives, this is shared with the relevant people and swift action is taken to address any concerns. This could include recognition of a student's low mood or poor attention in class, to their overall appearance and presentation. The residential manager is an established member of the student networks designed to support students in all aspects of their lives.

Staff have access to a range of good-quality training opportunities and have an annual appraisal. However, the process is underdeveloped and targets are not linked to the individual development needs of each staff member. Although there is regular sharing of information about students during handovers, staff are not offered one-to-one reflective sessions to talk about their work or to discuss the targets set in their annual appraisals.

The college has ambitious plans to improve and upgrade the residential provision, which are set out in the self-assessment report. The college recognises that students who stay in the residential provision do well and want to be able to offer this to more students in the future.

What does the college need to do to improve?

Points for improvement

- Review the catering arrangements to ensure that these meet the students' needs at every meal.
- Review the arrangements for activities.
- Ensure that IRDPs add value to the student's time at college by developing meaningful targets, with clear information on how they can be achieved.
- Ensure that the targets set during the staff annual appraisal process are meaningful and linked to the development needs of each member of staff.
- Provide opportunities for the staff to meet regularly with the residential accommodation manager to reflect on their practice and discuss their development needs.

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: 2509968

Principal/CEO: David Williams

Inspector

Helen Humphreys, His Majesty Inspector

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