

Peter Symonds College

Peter Symonds College, Owens Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 6RX

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Peter Symonds College is a sixth-form college providing courses for 16- to 19-year-olds and adults. Adult and higher education are on a separate site. Accommodation for 16- to 19-year-old boarders is in two boarding houses on the campus. At the time of this inspection, there were 66 boarders.

The college calls their residential students 'boarders', and they will be referred to as this throughout the report.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 November 2025

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: 21 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

Boarders are unanimously positive and enthusiastic about their boarding experience. They are incredibly complimentary about the house parents and their relationships with them, with some saying they genuinely love them. Boarders comment on how their lives have changed through the boarding experience, reflecting how pleased they are that they chose to board at the college. Boarders are positive about the opportunities they have to develop independent skills, so it is much less daunting when they move on to employment or higher education. The college ethos of 'cushioned adulthood' is well embedded and has a positive impact on the boarders.

Boarders are listened to and believe that their opinions are important. There are a variety of systems for boarders to share their views and ideas, from boarders' meetings, time with key house parents, anonymous suggestion boxes and informal opportunities. Boarders talk positively about the impact of this and have identified changes that have happened as a result. These have included changes to mealtimes, food options, activities and check-in processes. When boarders have a request that cannot be met, this is explained with a clear rationale as to why.

There is a positive culture in the college, where high expectations for academic work are combined with wide ranging opportunities for activities and social time. Activities include sport, bowling, gardening, games nights, mindfulness activities, and access to college facilities such as the gym and the sports hall. Alongside this, there are regular planned trips that boarders can access. Boarders can plan trips and activities through the student representation groups, allowing them to have a say in what they are doing.

Staff are attuned to the differing needs of all the boarders in their care. Individuality, identity and difference are promoted. Boarders have a range of clubs and societies that they can join, and formal support is available for those who may be struggling with or questioning their identity. Boarders say that they feel safe to be who they are. Monthly events celebrate difference, such as Black history month, disability celebrations and PRIDE.

Boarders are supported by a multidisciplinary team who provide well-being advice and guidance. A purposely equipped hub has been set up to provide a range of support. This includes support from professionals to help with occupational therapy, understanding anxiety, providing a safe space to explore identity, and advice and support groups focused on key areas such as neurodiversity. Staff from the hub work well with the college nurse to ensure that both physical and emotional needs can be responded to, or if necessary, boarders can be signposted to relevant external agencies.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Boarders feel safe and the atmosphere around campus is warm and respectful. Boarders know they can go to house parents with their worries or concerns as well as a range of other pastoral and academic staff throughout the college. Communication systems are clear, allowing staff across all departments to have the relevant information about each boarder that they need to provide high-quality support and care.

Safeguarding responses are strong. Staff know their roles in protecting boarders and are confident in the processes to follow should they be concerned for a boarder's safety or well-being. Joint working with partner agencies is key to the effective approach to keeping boarders safe.

Safeguarding leads understand the difference between strong views and extremist views and challenge appropriately when needed. Boarders feel safe and respected. Staff ensure that boarders can express their views but never at the risk of discriminating against others. This leads to a feeling of safety and cohesion. Leaders respond swiftly and comprehensively to new or emerging concerns in the wider community and educate both staff and boarders in these areas to reduce the likelihood of misinformation and discrimination.

Health and safety processes are well managed, with oversight from a dedicated team. There are robust procedures and rigorous checks to ensure that the boarders are kept safe. Boarders and staff both confirm that when things need repairing this is done immediately with minimal impact to boarders' lives. There is a suitable plan for progression and further development of the residential areas, including ongoing decoration and replacement of older furniture.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

There is a positive culture of support throughout the provision. All staff comment on how they feel supported both formally (through regular supervision) and informally by leaders who are present in the boarding accommodation regularly. Staff value this support. They feel confident that they can raise concerns when needed and will always be heard. Staff are consulted when changes occur and feel confident that they can challenge change too.

Joint working between education and boarding staff is seamless. The introduction of a new head of boarding has led to increased visibility and collaboration between the teams. Recording systems are clear and highlight any new or emerging concerns for boarders. This supports an effective multidisciplinary response.

Leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and boarders. Leaders have commissioned a variety of assessments to ensure that boarders' experiences are as positive as possible. When suggestions have been made, leaders have responded

immediately, making relevant changes and sharing the reason for these with boarders and staff.

There are rigorous checks from the governing body, whose members provide robust oversight and challenge to leaders. There are two dedicated boarding governors who regularly visit the boarding houses and speak to staff and boarders. Any outcomes from these visits are shared with the wider governing body, ensuring that there is good oversight of care practice.

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: SC062851

Principal: Sara Russell

Inspectors

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector

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