

Bedford College

Shuttleworth College, Old Warden Park, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 9EA

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

The residential component of Bedford College is set within a self-contained campus in the grounds of Shuttleworth College. Shuttleworth College offers agricultural and environmental education, as well as animal sciences and equine studies courses.

There are currently 23 residential students under the age of 18 and 26 residential students over 18. They are accommodated in residential halls and are split in ages and gender.

The residential manager oversees the residential provision and has been in this role for three years.

The inspectors only inspected the residential provision at this college.

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 March 2026

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: 26 April 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: good

Children are positive about the relationships they have with staff. They said they get on well with them, feel safe and that staff know them well.

Children have access to mental health and wellbeing support. Staff have completed training in respect of this. Children said staff would be alert to any changes in their or their friend's behaviour or demeanour. A parent said of the staff, 'My son always talks about them and how much he trusts them and can talk to them about things.'

Children who stay in residence have better college attendance rates than their peers who are not residential. Almost all children who stay in residence complete their course. Leaders' analysis of data is measured and proportionate.

Residential staff tend to have employment with the day college alongside residential roles. Education leads particularly value the role of the residential tutor, who acts as a first point of contact. These factors help enable effective links between the day college and the residential provision.

Children said that they felt respected, listened to and they know how to make a complaint. They are provided with the complaints procedure in their handbook. The procedure is also a feature of their induction to the college. Children said that they could talk to any staff if they had worries or concerns.

Children have several ways in which they can contribute their views about the provision. This includes routine meetings, surveys and consultations. Children are given roles such as activity leads. Children enjoy these responsibilities.

Children are generally positive about the activities. A range of activities are on offer. These include academic, sporting and non-sporting endeavours.

Children said that they feel more independent having stayed in the residential provision. Some parents confirmed this.

How well young people are helped and protected: good

Children feel safe. They can identify staff who they can speak to if they have concerns or worries. There have been no incidents of restraint. Children said that rules are fair. They are confident that staff would act to address any concerns regarding peer relationships.

One child has gone missing from the provision. The staff responded appropriately, attempting to contact the child, informing the parents and then the police. The child returned safely.

The staff have had training that includes online safety. Positive relationships have enabled students to share concerns about online safety. Leaders have provided information to families and children about the use of artificial intelligence and the creation of explicit images. They have also shared information about messaging and social media that can be used to create these images.

Staff are alert to potential indicators of extremism. This has led to referrals to the appropriate agencies.

Children say that bullying is not an issue. Staff recognise this as a possibility. Children said that they were confident that staff would take effective action if there were any incidents.

Improvements have been made to the recruitment process. A new document was developed during the inspection in respect of people not employed by the college but living on site. This is now more clearly aligned with legislative expectations.

New leaders and managers have developed a new lockdown policy and procedure. They have advanced plans to test the lockdown procedure imminently. However, leaders were unable to identify any previous tests of the lockdown procedure at the college or in the residential provision since the last inspection. Leaders have a clear rationale for why they have not tested this during the period the process was being reviewed and revised, but the absence of any practice drills means there is a current gap in knowledge of what the wider residual effects of an incident could be.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership team has high aspirations for the service. The team is ambitious and working hard to realise these aspirations. They are realistic about the progress made so far and where further improvements are needed.

The residential manager has a good understanding of the children. She has good oversight of the service. She spends time with staff and children, and this is reflected in the positive feedback from them. One member of staff said, 'She is very approachable. Senior leaders are more available now than before.'

The staff feel supported. They are pleased that the residential manager has returned and welcome her leadership. Staff receive some supervision sessions and feel well supported by the residential manager. Staff inductions provide the necessary training. All staff have undertaken training in a range of relevant subjects.

Staff who are also employed at other roles at the college have not had annual appraisals of their practice that have taken the residential role into consideration. This is a missed opportunity to review and reflect on the specific challenges and achievements in their residential role and dilutes the significance of the role. Leaders recognise this as a concern and are making changes to the appraisal process.

Over the past few months, leaders and managers have identified action to make several improvements to the provision. A development plan is in place and leaders meet regularly to review and monitor this. Some areas remain work in progress, such as increasing the frequency of supervision sessions, while others are now in place and leaders are beginning to monitor the impact of these changes.

Leaders have invited external scrutiny following an external review. Governors receive broad college-wide reports. However, governors do not receive routine standalone reports relating to the residential provision. This is a missed opportunity to enable more scrutiny and challenge from governors.

Feedback from families is generally positive, with some very positive comments. One parent said, 'He has transformed. He is a different child. He was miserable at school. [He] came out with one GCSE, has gone to college and is now so happy, confident and making progress academically. This has been the best decision ever.'

What does the college need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that residential staff benefit from an appraisal that appropriately considers their residential role.
- The registered person should ensure that they regularly test crisis management and lockdown policies and plans. This should include practice drills that identify where improvements can be made and enable the registered person to assess what the wider residual effects of an incident are likely to be.
- The registered person should ensure that governors receive written reports that include qualitative and quantitative data regarding the residential provision to help further their oversight of the provision.

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: SC041911

Principal/CEO: Yiannis Koursis

Inspectors

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector

Anver Rose, Social Care Inspector

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