

Loughborough College

Inspection report for further education college

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Inspector	Christy Wannop
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Date of last inspection	5 October 2006

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Loughborough College is a college of further education, offering a wide range of courses and qualifications from entry level to honours degree level. The college is set in a wide educational campus area on the edge of the town. The campus also includes Loughborough University and a Royal National Institute for the Blind College. The college offers accommodation to approximately 31 students aged 16 to 18, and up to 152 in total. The majority of residential students under 18 are international students. Most stay in modern residential blocks on campus. All students under 18 have the option of single rooms with en-suite bathroom facilities. The accommodation is grouped as flats, five or six rooms to a flat, sharing a kitchen and with access to a common room. Two flats are adapted to accommodate students with a physical disability. A warden supervises all residential students on campus, including those over 18. A small minority of students opt for 'home stay' accommodation in selected family homes in the local town. There is a range of additional student support services available, including counselling, health and mental health advisors.

Summary

This is the first inspection carried out by Ofsted under Section 87 of the Children Act 1989. The inspection was announced and covered the key national minimum standards in the Every Child Matters outcome areas, plus organisation.

This inspection found one shortfall in policy and procedure for safe recruitment. The college has good systems for promoting health, and delivers outstanding welfare support for students. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are strong, and the environment is a safe one in which to live and learn. Students get good information about what the college offers and their views are respected. Accommodation is well managed and students live in a comfortable environment. Staff are sensitive, energetic and enthusiastic and are well trained and supported by efficient managers.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in October 2006, outcomes for young people were found to be good and there were no shortfalls in standards. In November 2008, Ofsted inspected the education and training provided at the college and judged it to be good.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There is excellent support for students with health or personal problems; and this is a real strength in the college's organisation of accessible and skilled support for students. Students receive first aid treatment when they need it, and are well signposted to health care in the local community. The college gathers full information about students' health needs as part of pre-admission processes. A health awareness mentor provides imaginative guidance in one to one work. They also deliver health promotion campaigns on issues that matter to young people, such as self harm, eating disorders, drug issues, and smoking cessation. Several staff are trained

to provide sexual health information and advice. Students with mental health worries or problems can seek advice from the on site mental health specialist, who works closely with the counselling team.

Students have good quality catering provision within the college during the day, and have well equipped spacious kitchens in their accommodation, where they cook for themselves. Young people in residence say they get good food that meets cultural and religious needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The college's system for recruiting staff does not include all elements of the national minimum standard, or follow robust policy, procedure and government 'best practice' guidance. However, staff do not begin working with young people before a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau check is in place and there is close monitoring of visitors and contractors. The systems for keeping young people safe whilst they live and learn at the college, are generally strong in all other aspects, because staff have taken good action to improve, strengthen and exceed the minimum standards in many areas.

Students know that bullying is unacceptable and if they ask for help, they get it. Tutors are pro-active in identifying issues and staff deliver creative anti-bullying sessions to groups where this is needed. Safeguarding arrangements are good. There are strong systems, approved by the local authority, for procedure, training and practice to make sure that young people are protected from abuse. This important area is well embedded in the college's management and governance systems. Standards of behaviour are generally good, and staff cooperate to support young people and ensure that any sanctions are fair and appropriate. Staff from all disciplines are active in working to get young people back on track so that they do well in college. The complaint system is well integrated into a wider approach that encourages young people to speak up and be heard. The college is good at seeking, and listening to, suggestions for improvement.

Staff respect student's privacy when making regular visits around the residential area. Wardens know the best time to find students out of their rooms, cooking and socialising, and ensure that they are aware of any particular issues as they arise. They carry out health and safety room checks with students' consent a couple of times a year. Students get information about the purpose and timing of these checks and accept the reasons for them. Students have their own living accommodation, secure from public intrusion and regular checks are made to ensure that any visitors are safe to be in the buildings.

Safety hazards and risk assessments are well managed through very effective health and safety systems, so that young people and staff are not exposed to unnecessary hazards. Good arrangements are made for fire safety. The fire service provides advice and visit when requested. Students and staff have good information and training, there are regular drills, testing of equipment and a full fire risk assessment is in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

This is an area of excellent practice. Students have access to highly skilled support within the college through a full time counselling service, and an experienced team of student development

staff. They have a range of qualifications and experience in health, mental health and the needs of looked after children. There is good support for students with disabilities. Staff in residential and student development have a 'can do' attitude, and provide a service that is responsive to the needs of all students who are under 18. Staff promote inclusion, with particular focus on reaching even isolated students. They do this through a programme of enrichment activities, both in college time, and with residential students in the evenings and at weekends.

The college gives clear and positive messages about the equal value of all students. Policy, procedure and good practice helps students to know that their individual needs on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, and religion are valued, and the college is able to meet their diverse needs. Anti-discriminatory practice is well established in every day life, through information, training and particular project work with community 'hate crime' campaigns.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The college has established a very good atmosphere of cooperation and negotiation with students. Relationships between students and staff are positive, focus on strengths, and communication is mature. Students contribute to the operation of residential provision in the college through a well publicised approach to self advocacy and a range of democratic forums. The college consults about a wide range of issues across the learning curriculum. They make creative use of modern tools for communication to elicit the student voice, such as a college on-line network page and text messaging; as well as surveys, a student council and an annual conference. There are regular residential consultation forums, staff ask students how safe they feel; and ask direct questions such as, 'what should we change?', and, 'what are we doing wrong?' Student responses indicate that there is a generally high level of satisfaction with life in the halls of residence.

There are good arrangements for students to keep good contact with families overseas and friends through fast wireless internet connections in each building. Confidentiality is valued and staff seek young people's consent when they want to discuss welfare matters with parents.

There is a wealth of good quality information for students about the college and also about what to expect when living under college supervision in halls of residence. There is a college website, leaflets and information booklets. Staff are available and approachable. There is a good programme of face to face induction meetings where tutors, student support and development staff, international office staff and wardens deliver key information. There are plans to further strengthen information for students living in home stay lodgings and those students under 18 with coordinated advice particular to their needs.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The college's organisation of residential provision safeguards students' welfare and young people of widely differing ages do not share accommodation. Students live in modern, well-equipped, halls of residence. All have good, private en suite toilet, bathing facilities and lockable single rooms. There is a sensitive system of room allocation and a sensible approach to male and female students sharing accommodation.

The college has good arrangements to make sure that students living off campus or away on trips are safe and well. Some young overseas students want the experience of living with local Loughborough families while they study. All such home stay lodgings are checked and monitored. Staff seek feedback from the host and young person to ensure they are good, safe places for young people to live. Host families commented positively about the support from the college and young people enjoyed the opportunities for getting involved in the local community and practicing their English.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The college makes a clear statement of the principles of residential provision and student support, and this is widely available in a range of publications on the website, in brochures and information leaflets. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and young people can be confident that their needs can be met.

College management systems of risk assessment and record keeping contribute to students' welfare. There is a strong team approach; and partnership working across disciplines and skill areas to encourage accountability and development ideas from staff at all levels.

Students are adequately supervised by friendly, enthusiastic and caring staff. Students report that they know how to contact a responsible adult easily. The warden team communicates well to ensure that there is a good handover of information and that any young people causing concern have the supervision they need. A warden provides an active, visible presence throughout the evening, night and at weekends. They are out and about touring the different buildings, talking with young people, and making sure that they are safe and well. The college deploys a member of staff to carry out flexible enrichment activities across a seven day week, and this provides additional adult supervision. Staff responsible for residential students have specific residential and welfare duties, with satisfactory induction and improved training. Staff are motivated, keen to develop skills and they have good guidance from managers as well as clear written procedures.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the college has careful vetting procedure and practice for recruiting staff, (including volunteers, ancillary and sessional staff) and includes all elements of the standard. (NMS 34.1)