

# Peter Symonds College

Inspection report for further education college

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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**

Peter Symonds is a further education college for students aged between 16 & 19 years. There are two distinct and separate co-educational boarding houses located on the campus which between them can accommodate up to 80 students. Both boarding houses are purpose built with one dating back to Victorian times while the other was constructed in 1997. Accommodation in both houses is of a good standard, comprising mostly of single and double rooms with a small number having three sharing. There are also some en suite facilities. A head of boarding oversees the residential provision. The residential and day house parents provide 24 hour support for boarding students, and the college has an excellent working relationship with the local General Practitioner's surgery. There are a wide range of facilities available on the campus for students and excellent individual support provided by the student services department. The college has long established links with the armed forces and the Falkland Islands, with applications from students with these connections being given priority for boarding. The college does not arrange lodgings or any other off site accommodation except for the purpose of organised trips.

### **Summary**

The college achieves positive outcomes for its boarding students. They provide a safe, secure and inclusive environment for students within which they feel safe. Students are treated equally and fairly, and are protected from harm. There is a strong sense of community within the boarding provision. Students are happy, they get on extremely well with each other and enjoy excellent relationships with the staff that look after them. There is outstanding individual support available to students, both from within the college and from established relationships with external agencies. Student involvement is an integral aspect of how the college operates on a daily basis. House parents provide 24 hour cover within the boarding houses and excellent communication across the college ensures close monitoring of students and the provision of welfare support when necessary. There is clear and effective leadership of the boarding provision with a staff group that operate very effectively as a team. Boarding is subject to the college's systems of quality assurance and there is a clear commitment to maintaining and improving upon the provision for boarding students.

This inspection was carried out on an announced basis and the college was inspected against all of the key national minimum standards for Further education Colleges. There are three recommendations which relate to the storage of medication within boarding houses, the provision for accommodating students who are unwell, and one room with insufficient space to accommodate two students.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The college has taken suitable action to address the three recommendations arising from the previous inspection report. Members of staff do not now commence employment prior to their Criminal Records Bureau check having been received. The college also now provides the contact details of the local children's services department and Ofsted in the relevant policy documents relating to complaints and child protection.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There is excellent provision at the college for meeting the health care needs of students. Students have access to a first aid nurse adviser during college hours and there are qualified first aid staff on site at all times. The college has an extremely good working relationship with the local surgery which students benefit from. A registered nurse from the surgery holds weekly clinics at the college and students have good access to a male or female General Practitioner, either independently or via college staff. There is currently no provision specifically for the use of students who are unwell and need isolating. Records of medication, illnesses, accidents, and injuries are maintained appropriately and effectively monitored. Students are provided with a lockable facility and clear guidelines in relation to storing and administering their own medication. Medication provided by college staff is not being stored in cabinets designed for the purpose.

The college has effective systems in place for identifying and supporting students who have additional support needs, for whatever reason. Welfare plans for individual students are drawn up when necessary and communicated to staff on a 'need to know' basis only. Students benefit from excellent levels of individual support and information that is available to them. 'Student Services' are located centrally on the college campus and provide good personal support, a wide range of health related information, and are able to 'signpost' students to external agencies when necessary. 'Health Awareness' campaigns are held regularly across the college and health related topics are covered during tutorial sessions. Students' health is also enhanced by the provision of nutritious and varied meals.

## Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The college provides a safe and secure environment for students within which they feel safe and are suitably protected from harm. Students report no concerns at all in relation to bullying. The senior designated person for child protection and six senior staff have all completed safeguarding training provided by the local authority and there are established links with the local children's services department. All staff cover safeguarding as part of their induction and there has been training provided for the whole staff group since the previous inspection by a child protection specialist from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff are well aware of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns relating to child protection. Students are provided with an informative leaflet entitled 'Being Safe' which deals with personal safety. They are also given practical guidelines should they be concerned for any reason about a fellow student.

Excellent written information is provided for students in the form of two handbooks, one of which is specific to boarders. These state clearly the college rules and the expectations of students in relation to their behaviour. Students spoken to were well aware of the college rules and described having good relationships with staff, who treated them fairly. Records of significant sanctions are maintained and monitored by senior staff and are at a very low level. All students encountered during the inspection were helpful and courteous and observations showed the general standard of behaviour to be extremely good. Complaints information for students is contained within the handbooks they receive, and a senior staff member has

responsibility for monitoring and maintaining records in relation to complaints. Records showed the low level of complaints received to have been addressed thoroughly.

The college provides a safe and secure physical environment for boarders. There is excellent provision for managing risk associated with the premises and for activities undertaken by students both on and off site. Access to boarding houses is gained by electronic fob keys provided for all boarders and there is a staff presence in both boarding houses at all times. Fire safety arrangements at the college are excellent. Students receive fire safety information as part of their induction, they are well aware of the emergency evacuation procedures and there is an established system for them to sign in and out of each boarding house. The main entrances to both boarding houses are included in a system of closed circuit television which monitors the college site and there is no unsupervised access to boarding accommodation.

Recruitment procedures are closely monitored and provide adequate safeguards for the welfare of students. The college is prepared for the imminent implementation of the new vetting and barring arrangements.

There is outstanding provision at the college for monitoring and addressing health and safety matters. Comprehensive policies and procedures underpin good practice and established systems provide for regular internal and external safety audits. Staff and students cover health and safety as part of their induction process. Written risk assessments are in place for all aspects of safety, and a health and safety group meet regularly to monitor and address safety issues. Appropriate procedures are in place and rigorously applied to any hazardous pursuits or off site trips taking place.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

There is outstanding provision across the college for supporting individual students who may have personal problems or who have identified additional needs. Students are provided with excellent written information about the support services available and are also encouraged to 'look out' for fellow students who may have personal problems. Students enjoy very positive relationships with their house parents who are available on a daily basis. They all have allocated personal tutors with whom they meet regularly and who are easily accessible. There is a college counselling team on site to which students can self refer on line. Student services, operating from a central point on the campus, provide an extensive range of support for individual students. This includes signposting to external agencies when necessary. The college has a chaplain who is available to students, independent persons are available, and students are provided with the contact details of independent helplines. Those boarders who may have additional needs which affect their learning are able to access the study support department within the college. Where necessary, individual care plans are devised to address specific needs. Both electronic and face to face communication across the college is excellent and plays a vital role in identifying, monitoring and addressing individual welfare needs presented by students.

The college provides an inclusive environment for students within which there are equal opportunities for all, where boarders report not experiencing any inappropriate discrimination, and where diversity is promoted. The requirements of the 'Single Equality Scheme' are being addressed and the college has dedicated staff with responsibility for equal opportunities matters across the campus. There are groups looking at all areas included within the scheme and students are wholly involved in the process. The catering department organises theme nights for boarders,

there is a 'diversity week' held each year within the college, special dietary needs are addressed, and there is support for minority groups provided. At the time of the inspection there were no specific religious or cultural needs associated with boarding students.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Student involvement is an integral part of the college culture and there is excellent provision for enabling boarders to express their views and influence how the boarding provision operates. Two representatives from each boarding house meet with the head of boarding every half term. There are regular house meetings and all boarders are surveyed annually for their views. In addition, a boarders 'leavers questionnaire' is being introduced this academic year. Catering meetings also take place where boarders meet with the catering manager to express their views and make suggestions in relation to the meals provided for them. A 'student union' is established within the college and is now to include provision for a boarding representative. A key aspect of life as a boarder at the college is the strong relationships that there are with the house parents in each house. Boarding houses are staffed 24 hours a day and boarders are able to express their views freely to their house parents.

Facilities in the boarding provision enable all boarders to maintain contact with their parents and families. There is internet access in all bedrooms for students with laptops. Additional computers are available within each boarding house and students are permitted the use of mobile phones. Payphones are also available within each boarding house and are solely for the use of boarders. Individual records show parents are contacted when there are welfare concerns in relation to individual students. The information technology department within the college is currently developing a 'parent portal' which is anticipated to be launched shortly and will greatly improve parents access to information.

Provision for the induction of new boarding students is excellent. Students arrive prior to the start of the term and have opportunities to meet staff and familiarise themselves with the college campus and the local area. Important information is provided in written form and via presentations, including one relating to personal safety from the local police. New students are taken on a 'fun' trip out prior to the term starting to provide them with an opportunity to get to know each other better. The college provides excellent information, guidance and support for students leaving the college to go on to either higher education or employment. Those students spoken to who were in their last year were very positive about how they were being prepared for life after Peter Symonds.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Students benefit from boarding provision which operates efficiently and effectively and which safeguards their welfare. Two separate and quite distinct boarding houses provide accommodation of a very good standard and students identify strongly with their own house. There are communal kitchens and common rooms, and sleeping accommodation that is separated by gender. Toilet and washing facilities are sufficient in number and suitably private. One room in 'School House' is currently being occupied by two students and is not of sufficient size for the purpose. No students at the college are accommodated in lodgings.

Arrangements for off site accommodation and activities for students is excellent. There are comprehensive procedures which ensure the welfare of students is safeguarded, and which are rigorously applied and very closely monitored by senior staff. There is a very close working relationship with the local authority in relation to hazardous pursuits, with Hampshire being renowned as a centre of excellence in this area. The college follows Hampshire's policies and procedures in this area and routinely seeks their approval prior to trips and activities taking place.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Boarding provision at the college operates extremely efficiently and effectively to the benefit of boarding students. The head of boarding provides outstanding leadership and management of a staff group who operate remarkably well as a team to provide a high standard of pastoral care.

Students and their parents are provided with excellent written information about the college, its boarding provision and the support systems available. The college also has an informative website and a 'boarding intranet' providing excellent access to information and contributing highly effectively to the welfare support of students. Communication across the college is exceedingly good and there are established systems which provide for close and effective monitoring of individual students and matters concerning their welfare.

Staff who work in the boarding houses are extremely well supported and are subject to annual appraisal. Staff are provided with excellent development opportunities relevant to their role. There is 24 hour staffing cover in the boarding houses and students report always being able to contact a staff member, both day and night.

Self assessment and quality assurance systems are integral to how the college operates and demonstrate a clear and ongoing commitment to improving the boarding provision and the welfare support for all students.

The promotion of equality and diversity across the college is outstanding. Documentation demonstrates a clear commitment to providing equal opportunities, to tackling discrimination of all forms and to promoting diversity. The 'Every Child Matters' initiative is fully integrated within the college and there is exceptional support provided for students with additional needs. Students reported the college to be an inclusive environment and that they are not subject to any form of inappropriate discrimination.

## 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):

- review the arrangements in boarding houses for the storage of medication (NMS 14)
- review the accommodation arrangements for students who are unwell and may need to be isolated (NMS 43)
- ensure that the sleeping accommodation for students in 'School House' provides adequate space for individual students. (NMS 39)