

Loughborough 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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 34 students aged 16 to 18, and has accommodated up to 133 students in total. The majority of residential students under 18 are international students.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This full announced inspection assessed the college's performance against the key national minimum standards for students who are accommodated by the college and under the age of 18.

The college provides resident students, who are aged under 18, with a satisfactory service with some good features, such as accommodation and the promotion of health. The strengths of this college lie in its senior leadership team and staff who are responsive and highly motivated to achieve good outcomes for their students.

Some shortfalls in meeting the national minimum standards have been identified. The college procedure for students who are missing and information for host families are not explicit to ensure students under the age of 18 are properly safeguarded. The number of staff with responsibility for students who are accommodated, their experience and qualifications should be improved to ensure both students and staff are protected. Students from minority groups should be encouraged more to integrate into college life to prevent isolation.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since last being inspected, the college has introduced improvements to its recruitment practice, confirming that checks for newly appointed staff are in place prior to commencement of employment. However, some references received for members of staff working with residential students are brief and do not specify suitability to work with young people. Furthermore they are not verified by college staff directly with referees to ensure references are genuine. This does not ensure that students are looked after by adults who are confirmed as being safe to work with young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The college actively encourages healthy lifestyles for all of its students through its prominent information displays, hosting of health-related events and in-house sexual health provision. Appropriate first aid and minor illness treatment are available to students. Residential students are encouraged to register with local General Practitioner surgeries to provide direct access to National Health Services.

Residential students have access to effective coordinated services that identify and help manage any arising mental health, welfare and personal issues. Residential students say they feel well cared for by accommodation staff, who ensure that they can access the health care they need. An annual survey completed on the health of all students provides good information indicating areas for improvement to ensure health continues to be effectively promoted.

Students access good quality catering provision via the college cafes and restaurant. Suitable kitchen and cooking equipment are provided in all flats as students are accommodated for self-catering provision. Students have mixed views on the self-catering provision; some enjoy being able to cook for themselves and others prefer to have food delivered or eat out. Residential students following sporting curricular access lessons designed to enhance their aspiration to become athletes by promoting professional disciplines that include the importance of correct diet coupled with healthy living. Some students access the Homestay provision which provides half-board accommodation.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The college has satisfactory systems in place for safeguarding students. Policy, procedure and practice are coordinated under a senior designated manager, which ensures a prompt response to any suspicion of abuse. A prompt referral system to the local authority safeguarding team assists the timely assessment and formal response to any issue of concern. This ensures that effective interagency liaison between the college and safeguarding services exists in practice.

Residential staff can demonstrate their awareness of their protective responsibilities. Students confirm that they feel safe. However, the procedure for students who go missing is not robust as timescales for reporting to parents and the police are too long for students who are under 18. Furthermore, no guidance is given to host families with regard to the procedure to follow should a student make a disclosure to them.

Students are protected from bullying and harassment by effective staff responses tackling any form of discriminative or oppressive behaviour. Students report that bullying and harassment are not issues for them.

A fair and proportionate student disciplinary policy relating to unacceptable behaviour and breaches of student discipline operates within the college. The code of conduct is clearly understood by students, through which good standards of behaviour are encouraged.

The college responds constructively to concerns and complaints from students. The accessible complaints system enables students to express their views, be aware of how concerns can be addressed and be informed of their outcome. Students know whom to talk with if they are worried about any aspect of college life. Personal privacy and confidentiality are fully respected.

Students are protected from safety hazards. An in-house audit process addresses health and safety arrangements across all areas of the college, including student accommodation. Fire risk assessment and management across the whole campus inform staff of the precautions and checks to take that keep students safe from the risk of fire. These arrangements effectively ensure the specific needs of residential students are protected.

Staff follow a safer recruitment policy and ensure safety checks such as references and the Criminal Records Bureau check are completed prior to staff commencing employment in residence. There is an in-depth interview process where the applicant's experience, knowledge and attitudes are fully explored. However, references are not always satisfactory, as some are brief and do not always state any known reason why a person should not be employed to work with young people. Furthermore, there is no direct contact by the college with each referee to verify references. This does not ensure that students are looked after by adults who are confirmed as being safe to work with young people.

On-site security is good, balancing the needs of a busy college with the personal safety of students living on site. Residential blocks are secure from external intrusion by the strategic use of closed circuit television cameras and personal keys. Students say that their belongings remain safe because of these protective measures. Students are protected from unsupervised contact with adults or visitors who have not been subject to the college's complete recruitment checking procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Resident students receive good personal support from staff. Each student has access to a number of college staff to whom he or she can confidently turn for guidance with any personal problems. In addition to the progress tutors and the staff who manage the residential provision, there are a range of professionals within the college who focus upon the well-being of students. These include a qualified professional counsellor, student support staff, student sexual health advisors and staff working in the international office who support international students with documentation they need to be a student in this country, language and any concerns

they may have.

College staff clearly respect difference in relation to gender, disability, race, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation and academic or sporting ability. Sensitivity to these factors is evident in all aspects of the care provided to students. There is a good response to any discriminatory behaviour from students but this kind of behaviour is rare. Students have been provided with a faster internet access which has allowed them to more easily communicate with their families. This is particularly important to international students. However, staff and students spoke about the difficulties of integrating minority groups into life in the college. Some students reported a lack of activities and feeling bored at times. Furthermore, some students felt that the information they are given upon admission is not clear. For example, some students said they did not realise the accommodation meant they had to cook for themselves and some had not known from where they could acquire spiritual guidance. Therefore, residential students are not fully integrated into all aspects of college life, enabling them to feel accepted.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Students are encouraged and enabled to contribute to and influence the operation of the college and its residential provision. Using a range of consultative meetings, feedback forms and on-line tools, students have an active say and make their views known directly to senior management or through their course representatives. As a result of listening to students, a number of changes have been made. These include individual bike lockers, faster internet connection and a new heating system to ensure each block of flats has plenty of hot water.

Staff respect students' views and positive feedback from students confirms the appreciation of their contribution. Students receive practical help to retain private contact with their parents and friends using bespoke information technology facilities.

Residential students who are now at the end of their year struggled to remember their induction at the beginning of the academic year. However, there is an established induction process in place, enabling staff to monitor individual progress and satisfaction through planned progress tutorials and residential activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Residential accommodation is sensitively allocated, which not only safeguards students' welfare but also is sensitive to friendship groups, gender, age, disability and culture.

Facilities within the residential blocks for students under the age of 18 are

comfortable, nicely decorated and furnished single en-suite study rooms. These are organised into flats of five or six rooms. Each flat has a well-equipped kitchen and are serviced daily by a team of housekeeping staff. Each block has its own well-equipped common room. Additionally, there is a recent superbly refurbished house which also accommodates a number of students who are under 18.

Some students enjoy the independence that living in accommodation at college offers. However, they also appreciate having a warden around if they need them.

Some students opt to stay in lodgings organised by the college, known as Homestay. Homestay lodgings are comfortable, clean and provide students with suitable provision. A member of staff from the college visits each host family once a year to assess that the accommodation is still suitable for students. All members of a host family over the age of 16 are appropriately checked with regards to the Criminal Records Bureau and references. Progress tutors for each student discuss their accommodation and its suitability in regular meetings, and report back to the accommodation staff if any issues have been identified. This ensures students are properly safeguarded while residing in lodgings.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The college provides a concise statement of the principles of residential provision and student support. This is made available to those needing this information in writing and through the college website.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Policy, procedure and practice, including a variety of awareness events and services, help students understand and celebrate the diversity of individual needs including race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, age and religion. Difference is accepted. However, the college is unable to evidence whether students who are under 18 and accommodated are accessing these services and events. Furthermore, the college struggles to fully integrate some of these students into college life which may mean some students feel isolated.

Staff follow clear residential practice and college policy, by working within a supportive well-organised team that strive to improve their service for young people. However, staffing levels are not appropriate for the number of students accommodated. This may put both students and staff at risk and limit staff organised recreational activities for students. Furthermore, some staff were not suitably qualified or experienced when they commenced employment. This means staff may not have the skills necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of students under the age of 18. However, staff are well trained and supported through the college. They are provided with good opportunities to further develop their career.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that if students under 18 go missing, staff have a robust procedure to follow which ensures they take appropriate measures to check the students' whereabouts, welfare and reason for absence. This includes timescales for reporting students who are missing to parents and the police (NMS 28.4)
- ensure satisfactory written guidance to host families accommodating students on behalf of the college is provided. This specifically refers to the lack of guidance about the college safeguarding procedures (NMS 46.6)
- ensure the system for recruiting staff who will work with students under 18 includes references that specifically ask all referees to state any known reason why the person should not be employed to work with young people, and the college make direct contact with each referee to verify the references (NMS 34.2)
- ensure identifiable minority groups among students and students who do not 'fit in' to the college, residential unit or student body are appropriately integrated and supported (NMS 17.1)
- ensure staff with responsibilities for supervision of residential students or provision of student welfare services have relevant qualifications and/or experience and competence for the tasks and level of responsibility they undertake (NMS 30.3)
- ensure there are sufficient staff, in numbers and availability, to maintain adequate supervision of students on all college sites outside teaching time, taking into account the age and nature of the student population, the layout of the college and grounds, and the range and nature of any activities involved. (NMS 29.2)