

Bridgwater and Taunton College

Bridgwater College, Cannington Centre for Land-Based Studies, Cannington, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA5 2LS

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Bridgwater and Taunton College provides residential accommodation at the Cannington site and with host families who are located in Bridgwater and Taunton. Residential accommodation situated at the Cannington site for residential students under 18 comprises four separate mixed-sex lodges. Thirty-nine students currently reside at the Cannington site and 19 young people, including overseas students, are resident with host families.

Each lodge accommodates up to 10 young people. Each room has full en-suite facilities. There are communal facilities in each lodge, including a kitchen and lounge. Under-18 students are accommodated mainly in the week during term time. Flexi-boarding is available by arrangement.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 May 2017

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.

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 17 March 2015

Key findings from this inspection

This college is outstanding because:

- There is a culture of positivity at the college that, along with high aspirations, allows the residential students to succeed and respect the staff, their peers and the college environment. The residential students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour with excellent support.
- Leaders and managers lead by example and succeed in creating a culture of high aspiration and successful outcomes for residential students, regardless of their starting points or their sometimes complex learning and support needs. Leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and students. This creates an open and inclusive environment, where everyone's views and opinions are encouraged, welcomed and acted upon.
- The safety of residential students is promoted highly effectively through robust and effective safeguarding systems and staff practice. The college leaders and manager promote the ethos that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. This ethos translates into a feeling of well-being and security for the residential students. All residential students spoken with said that they felt safe when boarding at the college. Leaders and managers are always looking to improve safety and develop staff practice using the latest research and innovative practice. As a result of such strong safeguarding practice, residential students feel safe, are never missing and do not experience bullying.
- Supported by an extremely comprehensive and effective system of risk assessment and risk management, residential students are encouraged to take appropriately managed and controlled risks in the learning and residential environments.
- Effective and consistent communication between residential and academic staff ensures that the residential students are making excellent progress in vocational and personal skills. This means that they will have the skills, knowledge and confidence to succeed in their chosen vocation. One student said, 'I have benefited from being a residential student. I have matured, I have more confidence.' Other students commented on how being a residential student gives them an advantage over day students. One said, 'Being residential gives us an edge on day students, we learn more life lessons. I liked this college because it was small and very friendly.' Another student said, 'It is an advantage living in residential, there is no travelling. It is easier to get your work done.'
- The residential students benefit from highly individualised, exceptionally supportive care from the well-trained and caring residential staff team. This team is led by a passionate manager who is committed to constant improvement and developing innovative strategies. She aims to further improve the support provided at the college for the residential students. The residential students consistently achieve higher academic outcomes than the day students.

- Residential students develop their communications skills, independent living skills, tolerance, respect for others, leadership and team work. The residential students are very proud of their college and very glad that they chose a residential course. One residential student said, 'I really like staying here, I like the food and I love my room. It is very safe here, I feel safe. I have learned independence skills, learned how to budget and be more independent. I am more organised. Staff really help you.' Another residential student commented, 'It's brilliant here, like a family. I don't want to go home at weekends, there is always something to do. I give it 10 out of 10. I have got more confident, I do mentoring; my mum has noticed the difference. I feel safe, no dramas here. There is nothing that could be better.'

The college's areas for development:

- Review the arrangements for the oversight and monitoring of the host family provision in Taunton and Bridgwater. Review contract agreements and the host family handbook to ensure host families have up-to-date information and contact numbers.
- Consider separating out the data for the under-18 students using the residential provision in the safeguarding audit in order to determine any arising issues specific to this group of students.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

The residential students consistently make exceptional progress from their starting points in all areas of their personal and academic lives. It is evident from records and from discussions with students that they have increased their budgeting, independence and social and emotional skills and their well-being since arriving at the college.

Progress made and outcomes achieved by the residential students exceed the progress and outcomes achieved by the day students.

The residential staff promote the self-esteem and confidence of the residential students by actively consulting with them and seeking their ideas and opinions. For example, the students are involved in student forums, interviewing potential members of staff, including senior managers, and writing a newspaper column for a regional newspaper. The residential students participate in regular college surveys, including one that asks the students to identify and rate their individual strengths and learning needs. This helps the students to take responsibility for their own learning needs, informs future targets and celebrates students' existing strengths. One element of the innovative practice within the college is that the student lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) group has devised and provided informative training for the staff.

The residential staff are extremely passionate about their role in promoting the learning and well-being of the students in their care. They have developed an informative healthy-mind programme for the students. There is an abundance of support services that the students are able to access, such as mental health support, medical support and training for students in topics such as how their behaviour affects others. The students asked for a mental health support group. The staff listened and this has been set up, and is facilitated by appropriately qualified staff.

The residential students benefit from being on-site when the day students are not and therefore are able to fully participate in events that happen at weekends and in the evening. In particular, they take full part in events at the farm and equine centre, such as the riding club and harvesting.

The residential students benefit from the college's excellent links with business and the use of the latest technology. The students develop their business skills and learn how they can be used in the community. Students commented that they recognise how the theory and best practice they learn at the college will benefit them and give them an advantage in their future employment.

There are excellent links and communication between the residential and academic staff. This means that the residential students receive consistently positive messages and support.

The residential staff succeed in promoting a creative programme of activities. It is designed in part to ensure that all residential students are able to make friends when they arrive at the college. This programme of activities is based on research into how to best encourage the students to make friends and take part in the activities so that no

one is isolated. The residential students enjoy a range of activities that promote their skills and a healthy lifestyle. Individual points are given for each activity that the students take part in and a prize is given for the lodge that accumulates the most points. Students commented that this system really encourages them to join in with activities such as crafts, trampoline sessions, guitar sessions, golf, movie nights and barbeques.

The residential students benefit from developing and maintaining exceptionally strong, trusting relationships with the residential staff. Staff maintain a very robust and comprehensive system of tracking the residential students. This enables the staff to be aware of any circumstances where a student may need extra support. The residential staff know all of the residential students very well. The staff are guided by comprehensive plans that detail the sometimes very complex needs of the students and how they are to be met. The excellent culture of vigilance and concern means that the students receive the help they need to ensure that they are safe, happy and able to make progress with their studies.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is a programme of maintenance and refurbishment in place for the lodges. Each lodge accommodates students from different courses and of different gender. This promotes interaction between the students. Each student has an en-suite bedroom that they are able to personalise and access to a shared common room and laundry facilities.

The students comment that there are fair rules in place when boarding. The residential staff have high expectations of the students with regard to showing consideration for other students and having respect for the staff and the physical environment. The students comment that they like their rooms, but think that in some areas the lodges could be more homely. The residential staff plan to address this through the planned refurbishment, which has started with the common room. Students are fully involved in this project and have chosen the colours and new layout of the room.

Each lodge has a 'lodge leader' who is elected by their peers. This innovative role enables the elected lodge leader to develop their leadership, communication and representation skills. The residential students also said that the lodge leader represents them at college forums, and is able to express views and suggestions on their behalf and therefore bring about change. Routines at the college run very smoothly, which benefits the residential students who participate in land-based studies courses and have to be at the farm for early morning duties.

The students who are boarding with host families commented that they really enjoyed staying with the families they board with and had no complaints. One overseas student currently staying with a host family said, 'My host mother always makes sure I am okay. I can't fault them, it is welcoming, safe and homely.'

A wide range of nutritious meals are available and included in the boarding fees. A system that monitors what the residential students are spending their money on ensures that staff know what students are eating and can support them in maintaining a healthy diet. Students commented that if they have special requirements, such as requesting vegetarian options, there is always a choice of meals to suit them.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

The vigilance of the staff when safeguarding the residential students is exceptionally effective. Staff actively follow up any potential safeguarding concerns regarding the students, in line with the college's robust safeguarding policies and procedures. The staff are very well trained so that if they become aware of any safeguarding issue regarding the residential students or members of staff, they are effectively and swiftly dealt with. The staff effectively liaise with external safeguarding professionals when necessary.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is a prominent focus on safeguarding. It is clear that the residential staff understand that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and act accordingly. Staff spoken with are very clear about the action they would take if a safeguarding issue were to arise. All residential staff are trained in safeguarding procedures. To ensure staff are up to date with the latest research and developments, regular training is delivered on topics such as awareness of female genital mutilation, e-safety, child sexual exploitation, Prevent and self-harm.

The safeguarding team at the college is committed to developing its practice through meaningful liaison with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. An online safeguarding audit tool has been developed. This links to a comprehensive self-assessment of safeguarding practice and procedures which reflects the requirements of 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance from the DfE. The college recently implemented this tool and scored 85% initially on a required target of 65%. An action plan was developed as a result of this audit. This included the development and implementation of a comprehensive safeguarding leaflet for visitors to the college. Another development was to ensure that governors read and understood the latest version of 'Keeping children safe in education'. Completion of these actions resulted in the latest audit score of 93%. This action evidences a commitment to continual improvement of safeguarding practice in the college. Data for under-18 residential students is not currently shown separately. However, the college intends to consider this separation of data in the future.

The residential staff focus on supporting the residential students to learn from their mistakes and promote positive behaviour rather than taking a punitive approach. For example, on the very rare occasions that it is necessary to take disciplinary action, the students are set behaviour improvement targets to achieve and are encouraged to verbally reflect on their actions. There are innovative approaches to support, such as the recent appointment of staff whose role it is to be 'well-being officers'. These staff work with the residential students to devise interventions and strategies to help them to overcome any difficulties or behavioural issues they may be experiencing.

All residential students spoken with said they feel really safe when boarding at the college or with their host families. One student living in a host family said, 'It is very safe here, I really like staying here.'

Staff recruitment procedures are robust to help to ensure that only suitable people are being employed at the college. Host families undergo strict vetting procedures prior to being approved to take students, including the carrying out of criminal records checks for all of the adults living in the house.

Risk assessment processes are highly effective, comprehensive and regularly updated and reviewed. Risk assessment documents are simple and give clear control measures

that staff should use to minimise any identified risks. Risk assessment is undertaken for the college site, individuals, and activities on- and off-site.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers succeed in creating and promoting a culture in the college of high aspiration and achievement. There are high expectations that staff will very effectively support residential students to succeed and make excellent progress in all areas of their personal and academic lives.

Bridgwater College and Somerset College merged during the autumn term of 2016. It is a credit to the leaders and managers how well this merger was planned and executed, meaning little or no disruption to the residential students. Work continues to be ongoing to fully merge all systems over the three college sites. Further work is continuing to improve the monitoring and oversight of the host family provision and update the host family handbook and contracts.

Leaders and managers encourage the staff and all of the residential students to become fully involved in college life and their contribution is valued. This results in the students and staff feeling a sense of ownership and responsibility. The students understand and are confident that leaders, managers and the staff really care about each and every one of them. The students receive every possible support to equip them with the qualifications and life skills that will help them to succeed when they leave the college and enter employment.

The college is a learning organisation. Leaders and managers ensure that they are involved in the latest research. This approach informs the residential staff and the students and helps the students develop their skills and knowledge. Leaders and managers encourage the staff to innovate and 'think outside the box' to improve the experience, progress and outcomes of the students. This led directly to the employment of well-being officers and the effective lodge points system. A culture of openness and trust exists between the residential staff and managers. This enables the staff to feel confident to admit mistakes to managers, so that they can be swiftly rectified and staff are able to learn from them.

Leaders and managers demonstrate that they know their strengths and areas for development. Identified areas for development are addressed in a timely manner. The college's self-evaluation system comprehensively details how this will be done, for example, the planned refurbishment of the student common room.

The residential staff receive effective support and challenge through comprehensive induction programmes and supervision. During these sessions, line managers promote good practice, agree training needs and agree professional development targets. Staff report that they are well led and managed. One member of staff said, 'I love working here, there is great morale. I love working with the students, we make a real difference. Our great pastoral support makes a real difference.'

Leaders and managers actively and effectively promote tolerance, equality and diversity. Information leaflets and posters are prominent throughout the residential provision.

Residential staff offer information and support to the residential students. This means the residential students are informed about topics such as British values and how to access support groups such as the college's LGBT support group.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of young people. They watched how professional staff work with young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the college knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC045170

Principal: Mike Robbins

Inspectors

Tina Maddison: social care regulatory inspector

David Kidner: social care regulatory inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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