

Sparsholt College Hampshire

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

Sparsholt College is a specialist land-based college located a short distance outside of Winchester, Hampshire. The college offers a variety of courses both full and part-time and in other areas as well as land-based subjects. Students can be of any age from 14 upwards. Sparsholt is the only college of its kind within Hampshire and has been designated as a centre of vocational excellence in two specialist areas of land-based learning. Examples of land-based subjects offered include equine studies, horticulture, agriculture, countryside management and fishery studies. The college campus is extensive and encompasses a large working farm, an equine unit, an animal management unit, an aquatics training centre, a small lake and a horticultural area. Additional facilities include a sports field, sports hall and gym, a rifle range, large library and an IT centre. The residential accommodation for students on-site comprises of 16 separate hostels of which nine accommodate under 18 students. All residential students have single rooms, the great majority of which have en-suite toilet and washing facilities. Catering and recreational facilities for students are located centrally within the campus. There are self-catering hostels used by adults only and the majority of hostels for under 18 students have kitchen and common room facilities.

Summary

There are good opportunities for prospective students and their parents to visit and meet with staff at the college. Excellent written information is provided for students covering all aspects of life at the college and including clear details of the support services available. Effective systems are in place to identify those students with additional support needs and these students are extremely well supported. All students undertake a comprehensive induction programme. There is excellent healthcare provision available to students, with an appropriate emphasis on health promotion. The college provides a physical environment within which students feel safe and where their welfare is suitably protected by the provision for health and safety, and security across the campus. There is excellent communication between staff across the college and students are provided with a variety of ways in which to express their views and contribute to how the college operates. The college has a strong commitment to quality assurance and there is clear and effective leadership of the college's residential provision and support services for its under 18 students. Comprehensive policies and procedures support and promote good practice across the college, however, the recruitment procedures in operation do not fully accord with the National Minimum Standards and are not being effectively monitored. The residential accommodation for students is of a good standard overall but there are two halls not being maintained to a satisfactory standard.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The college has improved in the following areas since the previous inspection carried out on 22/11/2004. All students now have facilities to store food, to prepare hot and cold snacks, and can access a common room area directly adjacent to their accommodation. Explicit written information in relation to bullying is now given to all students prior to their arrival at the college, and an annual survey is being carried out in order to ascertain the views of all residential students. The college's staff team has been enhanced by the appointment of a full time

residential support manager. Teaching packs covering a wide range of health and welfare related topics are now being used as part of the tutorial programme, and staff have undertaken specific training on equality and diversity utilising an external drama group. A centrally controlled door locking system for the residential accommodation has started to be installed and is operational in some halls. All students are now provided with wireless internet access and there is a greater range of activities available to students during their induction week.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Students benefit from excellent healthcare provision at the college. There are effective systems for obtaining health related information on students prior to their arrival and suitable arrangements are made for supporting and monitoring those with specific health needs, for example, devising individual welfare plans. The college has a registered nurse who is available to students on week days and there is good access to the local GP who holds weekly clinics on site. In addition a nurse from the local surgery holds a sexual health clinic at the college on a monthly basis. All of the college's wardens are suitably first aid trained and excellent systems across the college provide for effective monitoring of students who have specific health needs or where there may be a concern. This includes alerting wardens to check upon students who have not turned up for their first lecture of the day. Students are provided with clear details of how to access medical support at any time, including out-of-hours, and are also provided with a 'Your Health at College' booklet containing health advice and help line numbers. A range of health related literature is also available to students via student support services. The college nurse maintains medical records as required and there is effective monitoring of accidents occurring across the campus. Student services at the college deliver a comprehensive health education and promotion programme throughout the year which is linked to national and international events such as, 'World Aids Day' and 'National No Smoking Day'. External agencies are used to support the programme and in addition health related teaching packs are used within student tutorials. Students benefit from excellent provision in this area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is overall good provision at the college for ensuring students are protected from harm. The issue of 'bullying' is addressed with students during their induction week and via teaching packs used during tutorials. Incidents where bullying occurs are dealt with effectively and students do not consider bullying to be a problem at the college. Students and college staff receive briefing on child protection as part of their induction programmes and have suitable access to appropriate supporting policy and procedures documents. There is child protection refresher training provided for staff, but no formal process for monitoring who has attended. The subject is also covered with students via teaching packs during tutorials. Staff are aware of the college's designated child protection officer and the relevant reporting procedures. Students at the college feel well treated by staff and benefit from a clearly defined disciplinary policy that is fairly applied. A student Code of Conduct is signed up to by students and the college's expectations of students and their behaviour are stated explicitly. Records of significant sanctions are maintained appropriately and no unduly excessive sanctions are applied. The general standard of student behaviour at the college is good. Students at the college feel freely able to complain about aspects affecting their welfare and there are clear procedures enabling them to do so. The college deals rigorously and effectively with any complaints received and

maintains appropriate records in relation to these. Students and their parents are currently not made aware of how to contact Ofsted in relation to welfare complaints. Students are extremely well protected from the risk of fire. The fire safety arrangements at the college are deemed to be satisfactory by the fire authority, fire drills are carried out every half term, checks and tests of fire safety equipment are carried out as required, fire risk assessments are up to date for all residential accommodation, and records in relation to fire safety matters are being well maintained. Students are well aware of the emergency evacuation procedures and there are clear procedures for them to sign in and out. Students privacy is well respected while having due regard for their welfare. All students have single rooms which they are able to lock and all rooms contain a lockable cabinet. Staff are aware of the clear guidelines for both entering, and for having to search a students room. Students are happy that their privacy is being appropriately respected at the college. Recruitment procedures at the college are not being rigorously applied and do not accord fully with the National Minimum Standards. There is no effective monitoring of the recruitment procedures and some staff have commenced employment prior to references and Criminal Records Bureau checks having been received. A recently recruited Human Resources Director is in post at the college and is taking action to address the acknowledged shortfalls in the application and monitoring of procedures related to recruitment. Students' residential accommodation at the college is for their dedicated use and suitably secure from public intrusion. Access to the accommodation can only be gained by the use of an identity card, and these are provided only to students and essential staff. There is no routine access to, or use of residential accommodation by anyone other than students and staff during term time. CCTV covers the entrances to all residential halls and security staff patrol the campus at night time. Students at the college benefit from excellent provision for the management of risk across the campus. There is a culture within the college whereby safety is maintained as a high priority. Comprehensive policies and procedures underpin and promote good practice in relation to safety and there are established systems for ensuring a safe environment is provided for students. There is a health and safety committee that meets every term, all departments across the college have a health and safety representative, and there is a student health and safety policy provided for all students. Risk assessments are reviewed and revised as necessary and records of accidents are collated each term. Suitable procedures are followed for hazardous pursuits, both on and off site.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Students at the college benefit from excellent levels of personal support being available to them. There is an established network of support systems across the college that students are made aware of via written information, and this includes contact details of external support agencies. Students are also introduced to individual staff during their induction week and are well aware of how to access support when necessary. Individual welfare plans are devised for those students with identified additional support needs and these are monitored regularly. Tutors play a central role in the support for students, but not to the exclusion of other staff, and extremely good communication between staff allows information to be shared appropriately. A student liaison officer is available to students on a daily basis, and provides support, information and advice on a wide range of matters. There is a suitably qualified nurse on site who deals with medical and health related issues, and a counselling service is also available to students although there is currently not the facility for students to be able to self refer to this provision. The college's documentation demonstrates a commitment to equal opportunities and students are not subject to any form of inappropriate discrimination. There are effective

systems in place for identifying and addressing the additional support needs of students via the Learning Support and Student Support Services departments. Minority groups are well catered for at the college, an example of which is the 'Gay and Lesbian Student Union'. There are no students currently at the college with any specific cultural or religious needs, but the college do organise cultural 'theme' days and do cater for students with specific dietary requirements.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Students benefit from having a variety of ways in which they can express their views and influence how the college operates. There are regular meetings held with course representatives, student views are represented through an elected student association, surveys of all students take place termly, residential students are surveyed for their views annually, issues can be raised during tutorials, and all residential halls have an identified link warden. In addition, students are consulted about activities they would like to see provided on campus. Students at the college feel appropriately consulted about matters affecting them. All residential halls have telephones that can be used for emergency purposes and to receive incoming calls. There are also payphones at various locations around the campus and students have access to e-mail facilities. The majority of students have mobile phones and there is no concern among students about being able to contact their parents. Questionnaires received from parents commented positively about communication with the college and showed the college to be informing them appropriately about welfare matters affecting their children.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The overall standard of residential accommodation for under 18 students at the college is good. The majority of students are provided with en-suite facilities within single rooms which are well suited to their needs. Two of the residential halls however, are not being maintained to an acceptable standard, particularly in relation to the shared toilet and washing facilities. There is excellent provision at the college for ensuring students welfare is suitably protected and promoted while being accommodated away from the college site. This includes the use of appropriately licensed centres for activity based trips and a systematic approach to carrying out risk assessments and ensuring all associated procedures are completed prior to the trip taking place.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Prospective students and their parents are provided with comprehensive and explicit written information about the college, how it operates, the expectations of students, and the support services available to them. In addition to this the college's policies and procedures are available via the college website. The college has extremely effective systems in place for the monitoring of records related to risk assessments, sanctions, complaints, and accidents. There is, however, no equivalent system for the routine monitoring of recruitment records. Students at the college are expected to be able to live independently, and as such are adequately supervised by staff. A team of wardens operate a duty rota outside of teaching time and students are provided with their contact details and a telephone within each residential hall as a means of contacting them. This system proved effective when used by the inspectors to contact the duty warden. The

wardens are with one exception, college tutors, they operate extremely effectively as a team and are valued by the students as a means of support. The college employs an external company to provide night time security across the campus and additional staff are also employed to provide supervision for specific events. The team of wardens includes male and female staff, and they are all qualified in first-aid. Staff working within student support services at the college possess significant experience and are suitably competent to perform the roles they undertake. Newly appointed staff undertake a structured and comprehensive induction programme and are provided with job descriptions which clearly detail their responsibilities and lines of accountability. All staff cover child protection as part of their induction programme and are subject to annual appraisal of their performance. The college provides opportunities for staff to undertake further training on welfare related topics and matters related to specific student need. Equality and diversity, deaf awareness, and epilepsy are topics staff have received additional training on.

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):

- make provision for students to be able to self refer to the college's counsellors. (NMS 13) (Welfare Concern)
- ensure students and their parents are informed of how to contact Ofsted in relation to student welfare complaints. (NMS 5) (Welfare Concern)
- implement a more formalised system for the provision and monitoring of child protection training for college staff. (NMS 3)(Welfare Concern)
- ensure that the college's recruitment procedures include all of the elements detailed under Standard 34.2 and which can be verified from recruitment records. (NMS 34) (Welfare Concern)
- ensure that no member of staff subject to the requirements of Standard 34.2 commence employment at the college prior to a Criminal Records Bureau check having been completed. (NMS 34) (Welfare Concern)
- implement an effective system for the monitoring of recruitment records. (NMS 34) (Welfare Concern)
- ensure that the toilet and washing facilities within Palmer and Dymock Whyte residential halls are maintained to a satisfactory standard. (NMS 40)(Welfare Concern)
- provide visitors to the college's conference centre with explicit information in relation to the college campus which includes details of areas and facilities they are not permitted to access. (NMS 37)

- review and revise the induction programme for college staff. (NMS 30)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for further education college

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- under-age drinking, substance abuse and possession of obscene material by students are appropriately countered (NMS 6)
- students receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 14)
- students are adequately supervised when ill (NMS 15)
- students are supported in relation to any health or personal problems (NMS 16)
- students receive good quality catering provision (NMS 22)
- students have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals (NMS 23)
- students are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 43)

Ofsted considers 14 and 16 the key standards to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- students are protected from bullying and harassment (NMS 2)
- students are protected from abuse (NMS 3)
- use of discipline with students is fair and appropriate (NMS 4)
- students' complaints are adequately responded to (NMS 5)
- students are protected from the risk of fire (NMS 24)
- the welfare of any young people accommodated by the college other than its own students is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 26)
- students' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities (NMS 27)
- students' personal privacy is respected (NMS 33)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with residential students (NMS 34)
- students are protected from unsupervised contact with adults who have not been, subject to the college's complete recruitment checking procedures (NMS 35)
- students have their own living accommodation, secure from public intrusion (NMS 37)
- any security or surveillance measures provide security to protect students without compromising their privacy (NMS 38)
- students are given reasonable protection from safety hazards (NMS 42)

Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5, 24, 33, 34, 35, 37 and 42 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- students have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- students receive personal support from staff (NMS 13)
- students do not experience inappropriate discrimination (NMS 17)
- student welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands (NMS 25)
- students have access to a range of recreational areas (NMS 41)

Ofsted considers 13 and 17 the key standards to be inspected.

Annex A

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- students are enabled to contribute to the operation of residential provision in the college (NMS 12)
- students can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 18)
- students receive guidance, both on arrival at the college and in preparing to leave the college (NMS 20)
- there are sound relationships between staff and students (NMS 32)

Ofsted considers 12 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the college's organisation of residential provision safeguards students' welfare (NMS 10)
- students' personal possessions and money are protected (NMS 19)
- students are provided with satisfactory living accommodation (NMS 36)
- students have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 39)
- students have adequate and adequately private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 40)
- there are arrangements to ensure that students' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered (NMS 44)
- students can buy food and personal requisites while accommodated at college (NMS 45)
- the welfare of students placed in lodgings by the college is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 46)
- the welfare of students is safeguarded and promoted when accommodated away from the college site on a short-stay basis (NMS 47)

Ofsted considers 46 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- a clear statement of the principles of residential provision and student support at the college is available to those needing this information (NMS 1)
- the safeguarding and promotion of students' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7)
- there is clear leadership of residential provision in the college (NMS 8)
- crises affecting students' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- risk assessment and college record keeping contribute to students' welfare (NMS 21)
- students are appropriately supervised during free time (NMS 28)
- students are adequately supervised by staff (NMS 29)
- staff responsible for residential students have specific residential and welfare duties, with adequate induction and continued training (NMS 30)
- students are looked after by staff following clear residential and welfare policies and practice (NMS 31)

Ofsted considers 1, 21, 29 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.