

Sparsholt College Hampshire

Inspection report for further education college

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Inspector	Brian Mcquoid / David Coulter
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Address	Sparsholt College Sparsholt WINCHESTER Hampshire SO21 2NF
Telephone number	01962 776 441
Email	enquiry@sparsholt.ac.uk
Registered person	The Governing Body of Sparsholt College
Head of care	Tim Jackson
Head / Principal	Tim Jackson
Date of last inspection	9 October 2007

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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 12 separate halls of residence of which four accommodate students under the age of 18. All residential students under 18 years old have single rooms with 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 all halls for students under 18 years old have kitchen and common room facilities.

Summary

The college provides a safe, secure and inclusive environment for its under 18 residential students. Students report feeling safe and say that bullying is not a problem at all on the campus. They are protected from harm and are treated equally and fairly. Arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of students are excellent with all staff completing associated training. Recruitment procedures are rigorously applied, security provision is excellent and there are extremely effective systems for the management of risk across the campus. There is outstanding individual support available to students from a wide range of sources. Individual tutors play a central role and excellent communication across the college ensures the close monitoring of students and the provision of welfare support when necessary. Individual plans are devised for those with additional needs and these are closely monitored. The involvement of students is an integral aspect of how the college operates and is embedded in practice via the 'learner involvement' strategy. The residential support manager provides an excellent oversight of the residential provision for under 18 students and has been instrumental in improving the welfare support arrangements for students since the previous inspection. A team of full-time wardens are now available to students 24 hours a day and they play a pivotal role in maintaining an environment where students feel safe and where the general standard of student behaviour is very good.

Support for all college staff is extremely good with a comprehensive induction and ongoing training related to student welfare. Policies and procedures support and promote good practice and are subject to regular review. Rigorous self assessment and highly effective quality assurance procedures support the college's continuing commitment to improving the overall provision for its students. There is also very effective monitoring and oversight provided by a very active and involved governing body.

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 no recommendations arising from this report.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the previous inspection the college has taken action to address all of the recommendations arising from the report. Students are now able to self refer to the counselling service, and students and their parents are now provided with Ofsted contact details in relation to welfare complaints. Recruitment procedures now comply with the standards and are being rigorously applied and monitored. No staff commence employment prior to their criminal records bureau check having been received and there is now effective monitoring of staff training related to child protection. Newly appointed staff are now being provided with a comprehensive and structured induction and visitors to the conference centre are being given information about the campus and access restrictions that apply.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent systems in place to ensure that the health needs of students are both identified and appropriately met during their college placements. Students are registered with a health centre in Winchester and can also attain medical attention via the college nurse who is available each weekday. The nurse and college doctor will make referrals to specialist services as and when required. The wardens, who provide twenty four hour cover throughout the week, are all first aid trained and can provide an immediate response to accidents and incidents. Individual staff are pro-active in promoting the concept of 'healthy living', tutorials address health related issues and a health education programme covers areas such as smoking and alcohol abuse.

The college has a licensed bar and social area that can be accessed by all students. There is an expectation that students under 18 will not consume alcohol and breathalyser tests are used if it is felt an individual is in breach of college regulations. All students are issued with college identification that confirms their age. On admission all students are provided with a welcome pack that contains information on drug and alcohol misuse. While students are provided with college wide access to the internet the college security systems limits access to inappropriate sites.

Many students reside on a full-board basis and can access food throughout the day via a number of dining facilities on the college campus. The college's well qualified catering team offer a varied menu that incorporates seasonal variations. The majority of food on offer is produced on the premises. Healthy eating is promoted and a salad bar is always available. Special dietary needs are catered for on request. The meal voucher system provides an effective mechanism for staff to monitor individual's dietary intake. Any concerns regarding nutritional intake are discussed with individual students.

The college offers self-catering facilities and each of the residential units has equipment to make snacks and hot drinks. A college shop provides essential items and trips to supermarkets in Winchester are available daily. The views of students are regularly sought on the quality and quantity of food available. Food sampled during the course of the inspection was both appetising and well presented.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The college provides an environment for students which is safe and secure and within which they feel safe. Students receive information and presentations on personal safety as part of their induction and reported feeling safe with no concerns at all in relation to bullying. There is excellent provision for ensuring students' welfare is safeguarded and they are protected from harm. There is a dedicated child protection team and the college has a recently updated 'safeguarding' policy. All staff receive specific training and possess a sound knowledge and understanding of the procedures to follow should they have any child protection related concerns.

The college places a high priority on the safety and security of students across the campus. The robust approach used to deal with unacceptable behaviour has been successful in creating a safe community where there is a culture of respect and where incidents of anti social behaviour are very low. Students are provided with explicit information relating to the college's expectations of behaviour and the associated rules. They feel fairly treated and have good relationships with college staff.

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 has an established and rigorous system for dealing effectively with any complaints received and maintains comprehensive records in relation to these.

Fire safety provision at the college is excellent with students being extremely well protected from the risk of fire. All wardens are trained as fire marshals and students have fire safety sessions as part of their induction programme. Internal and external 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, practice evacuations are held regularly and there are clear procedures for them to sign in and out. Personal evacuation plans are drawn up for students where necessary.

All students are provided with single rooms which have en suite facilities. Rooms are able to be locked and all contain a lockable cabinet also. There are clear guidelines for both entering and for having to search a students room. Staff are acutely aware of these and students are happy that their privacy is being appropriately respected.

Comprehensive recruitment procedures at the college provide appropriate safeguards for the welfare of students and are being rigorously applied and monitored. Arrangements are also in place which ensure students are not subject to any unsupervised contact with adults who have not been appropriately vetted. Staff have completed training and are prepared for the implementation of the new vetting and barring arrangements.

Students benefit from excellent security arrangements across the campus. A dedicated team of wardens patrol the halls of residence and student communal areas 24 hours a day, while security staff responsible for the wider campus also maintain a 24 hour presence on site. Closed circuit television operates across the site but does not intrude upon student privacy. Students have electronic access to their own halls of residence only. There are rigorously applied

procedures for visitors to the campus and the residential accommodation is solely for the use of students during term time. There is no public access to student accommodation or to college facilities.

Arrangements for health and safety at the college are excellent. Students benefit from extremely good provision for the management of risk across the campus and there is an established 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. A health and safety working group meet regularly, all departments across the college have a health and safety representative and there is a health and safety manager who oversees and monitors all safety matters. Students are provided with a health and safety policy and have an associated presentation as part of their induction. Written risk assessments are reviewed and revised as necessary and records of accidents are closely monitored. Clear procedures for hazardous pursuits and for off site trips are rigorously applied and provide effectively for the welfare of students.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Established systems across the college ensure there is excellent personal support available to all students according to their need. The admissions process identifies and makes provision for those students with additional needs and there is close and effective monitoring of individual support plans devised for these students. The induction process provides students with clear and detailed information about how to access the support systems available to them from both within the college and from external agencies. Students are also introduced to individual support staff during their induction week. All students have an allocated personal tutor who performs a central role in providing them with support. Excellent communication between staff across the college allows information to be shared appropriately and welfare matters to be identified and monitored very effectively. The wide range of staff available on site to students includes a student liaison officer, the college nurse who deals with medical and health related issues, a counselling service to which students can self refer, the residential support manager and the team of wardens who are available 24 hours a day. In addition all halls of residence have a senior resident available for support and students are provided with the contact details of external agencies and independent help lines.

The promotion of equality and diversity is embedded in the college's practice. All academic staff and wardens receive specific and ongoing training in equality and diversity from a specialist provider and students also cover it as part of their induction programme. College documentation demonstrates a clear commitment to providing equal opportunities and tackling discrimination of any form. An established equality and diversity committee monitors the college's inclusive provision and students report that the college is an inclusive environment where they are treated equally and are not subject to any form of inappropriate discrimination. Extremely effective systems identifying and address the additional support needs of students and these are closely monitored. The college held a 'diversity fair' during November 2009 which addressed issues including disability, sexuality and ethnicity, and a 'health and wellbeing' fair held in December 2009 drew attention to different lifestyles. There is a quiet room available for prayer, provision is made for special dietary requirements and arrangements are made to transport students to their places of worship.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Consulting with students is an integral aspect of the college's operation. A 'learner involvement' strategy is embedded in current practice across the college and includes residential 'learner voice' meetings which focus specifically on residential issues. Students are surveyed for their views each term, they are able to raise issues during individual and group tutorials and regular meetings take place in the residential accommodation. In addition, there are opportunities to influence matters via the college 'feedback' policy and by direct contact with the residential support manager who is easily accessible and very approachable. Students feel they have a 'voice' and are able to influence matters affecting them.

The college makes extremely good provision for enabling students to maintain contact with their families and friends. There is wireless internet access across the campus and computer facilities available for those students who do not have their own laptop. 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 with the majority of students also having mobile phones. 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.

Students benefit from excellent arrangements for providing them with information, guidance and support upon arrival at the college. A structured induction programme takes place during a student's first week and there is an induction day specific to residential students also. This provides them with opportunities to meet staff and fellow students and get to know their way around the campus. A wide range of information is provided for all students and includes details of the support services there are available across the campus. In addition there are presentations from college staff and from external agencies in relation to welfare matters such as personal safety and safe driving.

The college prepares students extremely well for moving into employment or onto higher education. There are strong links with the 'connexions' service who have daily surgeries on site during term time. Students have excellent access to careers advice and are provided with opportunities for work placements and part time employment during their time at the college.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Residential provision at the college is organised effectively to ensure student welfare is suitably safeguarded. Under 18 students are accommodated in four dedicated and identical halls of residence which have all single rooms with en-suite facilities. Security arrangements are excellent with students having electronic access to their own provision only. There are communal common rooms and kitchens in each hall and the overall standard of accommodation is good. Each hall has a senior resident who provides an element of welfare support and who works closely with the team of wardens. Students are assessed in relation to their suitability for these roles and are also vetted as part of the process.

There is excellent provision at the college for ensuring the welfare of students is suitably protected and promoted while being accommodated away from the college site. Documentary

evidence shows comprehensive procedures are rigorously applied and closely monitored for all off-site trips.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Students at the college benefit from residential provision which operates extremely efficiently and effectively. The Residential Support Manager provides outstanding overall management of the provision and has been instrumental in developing initiatives which have significantly enhanced the welfare support for students. An example of this was the introduction of a dedicated team of full-time wardens who now provide welfare support 24 hours a day throughout term time, and includes night waking cover.

The college provides prospective students and their parents with comprehensive information about how the college operates, about the residential provision and the support services provided. The college has an informative website, written information includes a student handbook specific to the residential provision and there is easy access to information via the college intranet.

Established systems across the college provide for the extremely rigorous monitoring of records relating to risk assessments, sanctions, complaints, and accidents. The analysis of information informs practice development and contributes effectively to the welfare of students.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Documentation demonstrates a clear commitment to providing equal opportunities, to tackling discrimination of all forms and to promoting diversity. All students receive a presentation on equality and diversity as part of their induction programme and the college held a 'diversity' fair during November 2009. In addition the college has an equality and diversity committee which closely monitors the college's inclusive provision. There is exceptional support provided for students with additional needs and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda is embedded in practice across the college. Students reported the college to be an inclusive environment and there is no evidence of any form of inappropriate discrimination.

The college provides excellent supervision of its residential students, who are all over the age of 16 and expected to be able to live independently. A team of dedicated full time wardens have a centrally located office on campus and are available to students 24 hours a day during term time. The wardens are all first aid qualified, have a basic counselling qualification, and have received specific safeguarding training. They patrol the campus regularly throughout the day and night and students reported being able to contact a member of the team at any time. The team of wardens are supported by a number of college staff who are appointed assistant wardens. In addition all halls of residence for under 18 students have an appointed senior resident who links closely with wardens in relation to student welfare matters. The college also employs an external company to provide security across the campus 24 hours a day, with additional staff employed to provide supervision for specific events.

The college provides staff with a comprehensive induction programme upon appointment which includes guidance on child protection. There is excellent provision for ongoing training in welfare related matters and all staff are subject to annual appraisal. The college has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures which support and promote good practice

across the campus. These are subject to regular review and are made accessible to staff via a staff handbook and the college intranet.

There are outstanding arrangements across the college for promoting continuous improvement in the welfare provision for residential students. Rigorous self assessment and highly effective quality assurance procedures support this process, and there is close monitoring and oversight provided by a very active and involved governing body.

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

There are no recommendations.