

Sparsholt College Hampshire

Sparsholt College, Sparsholt, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 2NF

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Sparsholt College is a specialist further education college providing education in land and environment. Accommodation for 16- to 18-year-old students is available in halls of residence on the campus. There are currently 190 residential students under the age of 18.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 October 2025

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking into 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.

Date of last inspection: 3 May 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

Residential students are unanimously positive about their experience of staying at the college. They talk excitedly about the range of activities on offer, as well as how being residential means that they can study courses that would not be accessible to them otherwise as they live far away or could not get to the college early enough to carry out the full range of duties and activities.

Students talk fondly about the residential wardens. Residential students were seen to come to the wardens' office for a variety of reasons, including signing up for supermarket trips and organised activities or sitting and chatting with a drink or a toastie. Wardens were seen to engage with students well, encouraging them to try some of the clubs and activities on offer or to share their views on how the residential accommodation is run.

A wide range of communication methods are used to keep students updated on important matters, as well as activities and other resources that are available to them. A student intranet site has been successfully introduced. This includes details about what is on at the college, event calendars, details of things to do in the nearby towns and cities and access to different groups such as LGBTQ+, to name but a few. Activities are advertised and students are positive about what is available. The site also includes information on well-being and health.

Students have access to a range of meals. They contribute to the menu plans and have ample opportunity to share feedback. Arrangements are in place for students to have access to meals early and late in the day if necessary; this is important as some farm duties require students to eat at different times. The catering team makes itself known to students before they start, such as at open days and enrolment days.

Education staff and wardens liaise regularly to support residential students' academic and personal development and progress. They link with residential students to help them to become 'industry ready' while adapting to being in college and staying away from home. Progress coaches and wardens liaise with parents and carers when required, to help provide a rounded approach to supporting those who may be struggling with attendance or being away from home.

There is a dedicated nurse who attends the college each weekday to support the health needs of residential students. Students are also encouraged to register with a nearby GP surgery. They are supported to attend appointments when required and to be responsible for their own repeat medication and homely remedies. The nurse makes themselves known from the start, at open days and welcome days. Students can visit them in the medical office or the bespoke treatment room each morning. The nurse supports a separate clinic for sexual health services and works closely with the college well-being team and residential wardens. This means that, although

there is one nurse on site, there are other avenues of support that students can access in relation to their health needs. These individuals work closely together to ensure that students are offered a holistic approach to their health needs.

The arrangements for managing emergency medications for students are accessible and easy to follow. There are clear systems in place to ensure that staff know which student may require emergency medication. This includes emergency medication for health issues such as epilepsy, diabetes, asthma and serious allergies. Students are required to carry their own emergency medication with them, but there are also various access points throughout the college where staff can grab emergency medication, and the treatment room also has back-up medication if necessary. Staff receive specialist training relating to emergency medication, and the nurse follows up each incident that arises. Each student who may require emergency medication has a healthcare plan and bespoke emergency protocols for staff to follow.

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Residential students say that they feel safe while staying at the college. They know whom they can go to when worried or upset, such as the wardens or the well-being team as well as their tutors and other support staff. They say that they feel listened to and that things have improved as a result of the surveys that the college regularly carries out.

The wardens and well-being staff work closely together to support the needs of the more vulnerable students. All staff know the processes for safeguarding and child protection within the college and how to report concerns. Responses to safeguarding concerns are robust and timely. Students who make a disclosure are supported with care, to ensure that partner agencies are able to put appropriate plans in place, and protection when needed. A testimony to how well the well-being team supports students with their anxiety, worries or safeguarding concerns is just how many students access the well-being area to relax and to chat with the support staff, and how welcoming the hub feels.

The needs of the residential students are wide-ranging. Some students have education, health and care plans, and some require further support in other areas of their lives or in their residential experiences. Each residential student completes an independent living assessment before starting at the college to ensure that the help and support that they need are available when they arrive. The well-being team, the special educational needs team and health colleagues work alongside tutors and other support staff as well as the residential students and their parents or carers to iron out any concerns or issues during the transition into the college. This helps residential students to rapidly feel safe and accepted at the college.

External agencies such as the police, drug and alcohol support, religious leaders and other well-being specialists regularly visit the college, and residential students engage very well with them. A local police community support officer is an

independent listener for the residential students, with many seen chatting happily to her.

The nature of the courses that the college provides means that many involve high-risk machinery and activities. The college premises and estates team is methodical in its approach to ensuring safety across all activities in the college and grounds, regularly reviewing all risk assessments and ensuring that student safety comes first.

Residential students are protected from being supported by unsuitable people through strong safer recruitment practice. This practice is extended to governors and there are suitable checks on family members of those staff who live on site.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leaders and managers of the college are highly aspirational for all the students. They take particular pride in ensuring that residential students have a positive experience and that they benefit from the additional support and guidance as a result of living on site. Leaders and managers monitor both the academic and life skills progress of the residential students, ensuring that there are swift and effective responses should an area of additional need be identified.

The wraparound support for students involves a wide range of teams who work in unison. These include education and faculty staff, the senior leadership team, the on-site nurse, the well-being team, special educational needs professionals and employed higher education students. Support can include anything from a full and detailed health plan or access to clinics and specialist services to having an informal chat or help with revision strategies. Communication between these teams is seamless, ensuring that only relevant information about each student is shared with those who need to know. All are clear on their roles and responsibilities while ensuring that the student remains the focus of the required support throughout.

Residential wardens talk positively about their roles. They say that they are well supported by leaders and managers and have access to external supervision and support from a counsellor, who regularly visits to spend time with them. Both full-time and bank wardens are equally enthusiastic about their roles and the support that they receive. They are positive about the range of training available to them and are currently part of a pilot group developing a trauma-informed approach to meeting students' needs.

Governors have clear oversight of the residential provision and of the quality of service that students receive at the college. The safeguarding and special educational needs governor visits the college at least six times per year and ensures that they remain up to date about local and national safeguarding themes. Both the safeguarding governor and the chair of governors visit the residential provision, providing feedback and discussing their findings with the senior leadership team of the college.



The senior leadership team is constantly seeking to improve the experiences of all students, in particular the residential students, gaining their views and acting on them whenever possible. They have a strong understanding of the areas that require development across the residential areas in order to add value to the experience of residential students. The development plan is clear, time-bound and realistic. The senior leadership team ensures that residential students have the best possible experience at the college.



Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of young people, 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: SC061177

Principal: Julie Milburn

Inspectors

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

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