

Reaseheath FE College

Reaseheath, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DF

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Reaseheath College is a specialist provider of vocational education and training in further education and higher education for businesses, industries and communities that are mainly, but not exclusively, rural and land based. The college is situated close to the market town of Nantwich in Cheshire. Six halls of residence on the Reaseheath campus accommodate learners aged from 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection, there were 142 resident learners aged 16 to 18 on roll.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 January 2022

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account **good**

How well young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The college provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 25 September 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: good

Young people and staff have excellent relationships. Young people trust staff and feel that there is always someone available to support them, talk to them and help them. Staff make themselves available. They seek young people out and they are friendly, approachable and caring. Young people say that they are happy and enjoy being at the college. This is because they feel safe, they make friends and they have fun.

Young people are given an appropriate and helpful induction when they arrive at the college. This ensures that they understand what services and support are available to them.

In the main, students receive tailored support and help to meet their individual needs. The college has addressed the point for improvement from the last inspection and their two electronic recording systems are now closely linked and areas of need are identified well. The college is aware that the recording systems rely on staff inputting information accurately. This is something that the college is continually working with staff to improve. Any gaps in recording do not affect the progress that students make because staff know the young people and staff communicate with each other effectively.

Young people are encouraged and supported to engage in a range of extracurricular activities, including sports activities, societies and clubs, all of which are relevant to and complement their academic courses. These experiences provide young people with the opportunity to socialise, learn new skills and develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Student services staff, the safeguarding team and student activities teams are passionate, keen and focused on young people's experiences. Great efforts are made to develop, update and maintain the wide range of social and recreational activities. Data is used to understand the extent to which young people participate in the many activities and social groups. This helps to inform the staff teams on where to focus their efforts on improvement.

Students are given opportunities to learn life skills and gain work experience outside of their academic courses. For example, some students have completed a business plan for a college shop and pizza bar, while other students have taken on paid leadership roles, all of which will support their future career ambitions as they are able to include these activities on their CVs. Some students can obtain other paid roles in the college. This gives those students a sense of achievement and is part of their journey towards independence.

An on-site chaplain, who is accessible and actively engages with young people, contributes to the college's promotion of students' identity and sense of self. This

includes faith and non-faith activities and support. The role of the chaplain is varied and focuses on support, welfare and enrichment.

The well-being team is knowledgeable and keen and has a good understanding of the needs of young people in the college. A broad raft of resources, including technology, counsellors and links with partner agencies, help to provide a comprehensive package of support for those young people who are in need of emotional or welfare support. The well-being team works well in conjunction with the safeguarding team, which shares information and facilitates support to be offered to individuals.

Young people who live at the college have excellent attendance at their education provision. In part, this is because they enjoy their courses. If students do not attend their classes, they are unable to attend social activities and are required to attend the twilight catch-up sessions. In addition, a dedicated staff member is responsible for following up on students who have not attended their classes. This can sometimes result in referrals to the well-being or safeguarding teams.

The standard of accommodation for young people is adequate. Some halls are looking tired and are showing signs of wear and tear. The under-18s common room is functional but is basic and showing signs of plaster damage.

The college has worked hard through the pandemic to keep young people engaged and supported, and to understand the impact of COVID-19 on them. For example, welfare packs were given to students who were required to self-isolate. And a varied and interesting range of online activities was put in place to replace group activities that could not take place. Young people were given autonomy to be creative, for example, one student set up a competition with another college to see which college's students could travel the furthest by walking, running or cycling.

Regular internal feedback from students is obtained via quizzes or surveys and discussion with personal and academic tutors. There are numerous student representatives who share the views of young people more widely. Young people feel that they are listened to and their voices matter. When suggestions are made, they see that action is taken. For example, one young person has asked for water stations to be available after 8pm. This is a live issue, with plans in place to address it.

Young people's health needs, including sexual health, emotional health and physical health, are well promoted. For example, the college uses an external service to support young people's emotional health, with one-to-one sessions and a drop-in clinic. Similarly, external services are used to support sexual health with advice, including one-to-one sessions, sexual infection tests and a condom service.

The introduction of self-care awards has been a positive step, helping students to become more independent.

How well young people are helped and protected: good

Students are very clear about the risks of peer-on-peer abuse and sexual violence. They refer to bite-size training in lectures which raises awareness and vigilance. Students feel safe on campus and find student and safeguarding staff readily available 24 hours a day to receive and address their concerns. Any issues raised are addressed discreetly and promptly, helping them to feel safe and comfortable on campus in what is, for many, their first time living away from home.

From discussions with students during the inspection, it was very clear they are used to talking openly with trusted adults and each other about sensitive safeguarding issues. This helps students to speak out on any issue that is troubling them and they confirm that when they have raised any issue it is promptly addressed and always taken seriously.

While new residential staff were fully up to speed with the new 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) statutory guidance (2021) and themes for their practice, more established residential staff were less clear about the detail of the revised guidance and implications for their practice in relation to peer-on-peer abuse. However, the sound teamwork approach to keeping students safe means that this issue has not impacted on students' safety.

Staff and students are clear about the college rules and sanctions. When necessary, room searches for suspected drug misuse are carried out, with students' knowledge.

The college operates a clear and well-implemented disciplinary system which is well known by students, so they understand the possible outcomes of any misdemeanour. Sanctions are reasonable and consistently applied and, in the main, effective at deterring any repeat of unwanted behaviour.

The college's safeguarding systems provide effective links with statutory agencies and clear procedures for all residential staff to follow should they receive a disclosure or feel the need to whistle-blow. The designated safeguarding lead and deputy work well to update all staff and students on the internal and external referring mechanisms, which help to safeguard young people effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of student services is experienced and has managed the residential service for many years. He has a good understanding of the service and has forged good links with external agencies. This means that he has a good understanding of the local areas and the issues that may impact on residential students.

Regular management reviews of data from incidents provide a good understanding of emerging patterns and trends. Swift action is taken to reduce concerns and improve practice.

The college completes timely and thorough vetting and suitability checks on college and agency staff, volunteers and resident staff's adult family members, in line with statutory guidance. This keeps students safe from unsuitable adults on campus.

Staff in their probationary period are supported and receive well-planned and reflective meetings with their line manager at established regular intervals. Individual reflective sessions with line managers for established staff are not regularly provided, however, they do receive an annual appraisal. Nevertheless, staff feel very well supported, with regular informal conversations with managers. The provision of reflective sessions for residential staff was a point for improvement at the last inspection and is repeated at this inspection.

Governors offer robust support and challenge. The designated safeguarding governor has an in-depth understanding of the issues facing the service and has plans to continually improve the college. There is a new residential link governor who is developing further plans for monitoring the residential provision, which are in their infancy. Nevertheless, governors do have a good sense of the residential provision and provide clear challenge and governance.

Students are required to leave their identity card in student services when they leave campus. However, some students repeatedly fail to do so. Sanctions imposed have not proved effective in addressing this issue. This means that the effectiveness of the signing-out system is undermined and, in very isolated instances, the college does not have a clear picture of whether a student is off site or on site.

What does the college need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should consistently maintain an appropriate level of cleanliness and maintenance across all halls, swiftly addressing and repairing any damage. (NMS for the 'Accommodation of students under eighteen by FE colleges' 5.5)
- The registered person should raise the staff group's awareness of KCSIE 2021 revised statutory guidance and its application to practice. (NMS for the 'Accommodation of students under eighteen by FE colleges' 11.1)
- The registered person should ensure that residential staff receive regular reviews of their practice. (NMS for the 'Accommodation of students under eighteen by FE colleges' 15.1)
- The registered person should review, and revise if necessary, the signing-out system for students leaving campus. (NMS for the 'Accommodation of students under eighteen by FE colleges' 15.6)

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: SC041920

Principal/CEO: Marcus Clinton

Inspectors

Karen Forster, Regulatory Inspection Manager

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector

Paul Robinson, Social Care Inspector

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