

# Richard Huish College

South Road, Taunton, Somerset TA1 3EA

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this further education college with residential accommodation**

Richard Huish College provides a wide range of A-level courses, vocational courses and apprenticeships to students aged 16 to 19 years. Boarding accommodation is available for students who live overseas or in England but wish to avoid excessive travel. At the time of this inspection, 51 students stayed in the on-site, purpose-built boarding provision.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this college.

### **Inspection dates: 25 to 27 March 2024**

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

How well young people are helped and protected      good

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:** not applicable

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

The happy and welcoming atmosphere created by staff radiates throughout the boarding provision. Students very much like staying here and have formed long standing positive relationships with each other. Students respect and care for one another, valuing each other's differences and positively celebrating diversity. Students said that staying in the boarding house is like being part of one big family. Most students commented on the size of the provision, saying they felt it was not too big but just right. They said that they felt this enabled them to really get to know the staff and each other.

The relationships staff have built with the students are a strength of the college. Students speak with warmth and affection about the staff, who they say care about them and enable them well to reach their goals. Students particularly like that staff treat them with respect and as young adults rather than children. They also appreciate that staff are open to their views and ideas for further development of the college. An example of recent changes made because of listening to students' views are the changes made to the timing and location of the evening meal. Boarders also now have an oven, air fryers and rice cookers in the boarding house kitchen, which means they can prepare their own meals and snacks.

The quality of accommodation provided is excellent. Students like their single en-suite rooms and have personalised them with their belongings. Communal spaces are comfortable, well-furnished and enjoyed by students.

A wide range of enrichment activities are available. These activities promote students' confidence, social skills, emotional well-being and fitness. There is 'something for everyone' to join in with and students are encouraged to suggest ideas for trips and activities. Overall, the take up of activities is good.

Most boarding staff also work in the education provision. This means that students are provided with additional support and help in the evenings with their educational studies and learning.

Staff track students' educational destinations, outcomes and progress. The data shows the success of the students, including a significant number who have gone on to prestigious universities. Progress data is also used by staff to monitor how well students are doing and to identify when they may need additional support. This support is provided and helps the students to develop skills for adult life. When needed, written plans are in place that provide clear guidance for staff on what support students need and how best to provide it. Students and parents contribute their views to these support plans.

All National Minimum Standards for Further Education Residential Accommodation are met.

## **How well young people are helped and protected: good**

Students are kept safe in this college and consistently report that they feel safe in the boarding provision. Staff and governors regularly consult with students to seek their views and to check on their well-being.

A dedicated and experienced safeguarding team is available throughout the day and night, providing guidance and support when there are worries about students. This team understands the vulnerabilities facing children and young adults who live away from home. When necessary, action is taken to safeguard students by identifying and mitigating risks. There is good work to develop students' independence by signposting them to external support agencies. The safeguarding team works effectively with external agencies, students and their families in order to manage concerns. Safeguarding records are maintained but could be improved. Currently, the safeguarding records do not always align consistently to demonstrate clearly the decisions made and actions taken by staff. The leadership team recognises this area for development, having included it on their action plan prior to this inspection.

The well-being service is a strength of the college provision. The well-being team works successfully to empower, enable and support the students to develop self-awareness and self-management skills. Students make good use of the online 'Wellbeing Padlet', which signposts them to support organisations in the community.

The management of student behaviour is effective. Since the previous inspection, staff have become more focused on providing students with an opportunity to reflect, repair and learn from their behaviours, including the effect these can have on others. The basis of the behavioural approach is about being kind, respectful and a good member of the community. This is achieved in practice.

Risk is managed appropriately. Staff support students to understand and manage risks that are relevant to their age and experiences, for example online risks and the spiking of drinks when out. When high risks are identified, staff put in place risk management plans. They do not always use the same documentation and communication processes when there are other emerging risks that require staff to respond.

Clear health and safety systems are in place. Students are not consistently following food safety guide guidance, which has led to some food items being inappropriately stored and not labelled.

Senior leaders and the human resources team have a good understanding of safer recruitment and they apply policies and procedures effectively.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

Leaders and managers understand accurately how the college is performing and recognise the very positive contribution boarding provides to students' development. They are ambitious for the students and the development of the boarding provision.

Leaders and managers recognise the needs of students and adapt the provision to meet these needs. For example, the boarding offer is flexible and means boarders can stay for part of the week or term and stay at holiday times. This is particularly important in supporting students and reducing travel for those whose homes are across the other side of the world. Staff recognise the need for students to be able to develop their independence skills in a supportive and safe environment. Boarding students noted that a significant benefit they have over day students is that they have access to subject tutors and careers advisers outside of the academic day.

Leaders and managers use data they collect effectively in order to identify trends and patterns in students' progress and behaviour. Leaders then use this information to help them to focus their resources and target their support for students to best effect. The focus in recent years has been on developing the support aimed at tackling increasing concerns about anxiety. Staff across the different departments work holistically to promote positive emotional well-being among the students and staff teams. Leaders and managers review, analyse and reflect very effectively on events at the college. They use this process to further develop systems, approaches and policies.

Strong systems are in place to support and develop staff. Staff well-being sessions are a regular occurrence, including yoga, reflexology and mindfulness sessions. All staff receive regular opportunities to talk with their manager about their work with students. Helpful reflective discussions are commonplace. Currently, leaders and managers do not consistently record or share agreed actions arising from these discussions. In recognition of the added impact and complexity of work carried out by the safeguarding team, clinical supervision with an external person is made available.

Training and continuing professional development provided to staff are relevant to their role. There are good opportunities to build skills among the staff team and to promote consistency for students.

Governors work closely with leaders to identify and make continuous improvements. Governors regularly consult with boarding students about their experiences and are satisfied that students are kept safe.

Research is an integral part of the college's improvement plan. Every department is involved in identifying and researching a project relevant to their work with students. The findings from this research are published and used effectively, to develop the college and experiences for students.

## **What does the college need to do to improve?**

### **Points for improvement**

- College leaders should ensure that safeguarding records align consistently to show the decisions and actions taken by staff and include the rationale for those decisions.
- College leaders should ensure that any emerging risks use the same documentation and communication processes as pre-identified high risks.
- College leaders should ensure that all students understand and implement food safety and hygiene practices.
- College leaders should ensure that supervisors consistently record and share actions arising from supervision discussions.

### **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:** 2735045

**Principal:** Emma Fielding

**CEO:** John Abbott

### **Inspectors**

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector  
Paula Lahey, Social Care Inspector

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