

# The framework for inspecting residential provision in further education colleges

For use from September 2012

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This document sets out the framework for the inspection of residential provision in further education colleges in England. It should be read alongside the *Evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential provision in further education colleges*.

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## Introduction

1. This document sets out the framework for Ofsted's inspections of residential provision for young people under 18 in further education colleges. It applies to all general further education colleges, sixth form colleges and independent specialist colleges that we inspect. It does not apply to any colleges registered as care homes, where the residential provision is inspected by the Care Quality Commission.
2. 'Learners' refers to students who are resident either in accommodation provided directly by the college, or with host families arranged by the college.
3. This framework sets out: how the principles and processes underlying all Ofsted inspections are applied; the statutory basis for inspection; and a summary of the main features of the inspection process.
4. There is more detailed guidance in the *Evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential provision in further education colleges*.<sup>1</sup>
5. The evaluation schedule and the judgements made on inspection are underpinned by the national minimum standards for residential provision in colleges. Colleges are expected to meet statutory requirements and national minimum standards, having regard to any associated guidance issued by the relevant government departments. For the purposes of inspection, some standards are identified as key standards and all inspections will assess compliance with these key standards.

## The purpose of inspection

6. Inspections have two main purposes: to test compliance with the national minimum standards; and to make evaluative judgements about the quality and effectiveness of the principal areas of a college's work and its impact on residential learners' experiences and outcomes. Inspectors' judgements are guided by the grade descriptors set out in the evaluation schedule.
7. Ofsted's general principles of inspection are to:
  - support and promote improvement
  - be proportionate
  - focus on the needs of young people, their parents or carers, placing authorities and others who are interested in residential provision
  - focus on what colleges need from inspection

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<sup>1</sup> *Evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential provision in further education colleges* (120092), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120092](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120092).

- be transparent and consistent
- be accountable.

## **Legal basis for inspection**

8. Inspections of residential provision in colleges are carried out under the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000. They are based on the national minimum standards (NMS) set by government for residential provision of students under 18 years of age. The NMS apply to further education colleges as defined by section 91 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Any amendments or changes to the NMS are the responsibility of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS).
9. Ofsted inspects residential provision in colleges, but does not regulate it. This means that, unlike some other types of social care or welfare provision, we do not inspect residential provision in colleges against a set of regulations, or raise actions where such regulations are not met.
10. Where a college is registered as a care home, the residential provision is inspected by the Care Quality Commission rather than by Ofsted.

## **Frequency of inspection**

11. The frequency of inspections of residential provision in colleges is not prescribed by law. This is a matter of policy for Ofsted in agreement with BIS.
12. Ofsted will normally conduct a routine inspection of residential provision in a college once in a three-year period. An inspection of residential provision may take place at any time that a college is open. The timing will normally be based on risk and therefore related to the timing and outcome of the previous inspection of the college.

## **Notification of inspection**

13. Ofsted will usually give up to two days' notice of the inspection. The lead inspector will telephone the nominated contact at 9am, two working days before the start of the inspection.
14. Following the telephone call, the lead inspector will send, by email, a notification letter and a short questionnaire about the provision for the college to complete. The lead inspector will also invite the provider to send a self-assessment if available.
15. The inspectors will arrive at the college two working days after the telephone call.

## **Getting the views of learners, parents and carers, staff and other interested parties**

16. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which colleges have asked for and acted on the views of residential learners, their parents or carers, staff and placing authorities in reviewing and improving the boarding or residential experience for learners and its impact on them.
17. From September 2012, Ofsted will start to run an annual online survey to gather the views of learners, parents or carers, and staff in residential colleges. We will ask colleges to send an email or letter to these groups each year to invite them to fill in the questionnaire. The results of the most recent survey will then be used at the next inspection, and will help to identify any issues or areas to explore while the inspectors are on site.
18. Inspectors will also consider the views expressed by learners and staff in the course of the inspection. This may include group discussions, one-to-one meetings, or more informal conversations while the inspectors are assessing the quality of the accommodation.
19. Ofsted also seeks information from the local authority designated officer about any child protection enquiries or concerns that are ongoing or have occurred at the college since the previous inspection.

## **Length of inspection**

20. An inspection of residential provision will last no more than three days. Typically, the on-site inspection will start with the arrival of the lead inspector on the first day and finish two days later with feedback to the college's senior managers and/or governors.

## **The inspectors**

21. The inspection of residential provision is conducted by inspectors who are suitably experienced and trained to inspect the welfare of residential learners in colleges. They have particular expertise in safeguarding children and young people.
22. Inspections of residential provision may be undertaken by one or more inspectors, depending on the size and location of the provision, and the number of residential learners on roll.

## **Preparation for inspection**

23. From September 2012, Ofsted will no longer provide a template for self-assessment for residential providers to complete prior to their inspection. However, we still emphasise the importance of self-assessment as a tool for

performance management and improvement. Inspectors will accept any evaluation the college has made of its provision in whatever form they wish to present it.

24. Inspectors will keep their requests for information from colleges to a minimum, as part of our aim to reduce bureaucracy and the reduction in notification of inspection. In preparing for inspection, inspectors will look at the information that Ofsted already holds – or is publicly available – about the college, which includes:
  - previous inspection reports
  - the college's own website
  - any evaluation of the residential provision provided by the college.
25. The national minimum standards give a list of policy documents and records in the appendices at the end, which inspectors will need to look at during the inspection. It would be helpful if colleges could provide these to inspectors on arrival at the college.

## **During the inspection**

26. In the course of the inspection, inspectors will:
  - listen and talk to learners
  - observe staff interacting with learners
  - talk to staff, including those with responsibility for leading, managing and organising residential provision or key aspects of it
  - read policies and observe how they are implemented
  - observe procedures such as handovers of information between staff
  - look at records, case files and other relevant documents
  - gather views from interested parties such as social workers, placing authorities and teaching staff, as appropriate
  - inspect the premises, accommodation, facilities, and health and safety arrangements.
27. The inspection will specifically focus on gathering evidence to make the judgements in the evaluation schedule. The detail of activities may vary according to evidence gathered, either before or during the inspection, and the lines of enquiry thrown up by the evidence.

## **Code of conduct**

28. Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and treat everyone they encounter during inspections fairly and with respect.

29. The code of conduct requires inspectors to:
- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
  - evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements
  - base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
  - have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
  - report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
  - carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
  - try to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
  - act in the best interests and well-being of service users
  - maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
  - respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
  - respond appropriately to reasonable requests
  - take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

## Expectations of colleges

30. So that inspection is productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and colleges establish and maintain a professional working relationship, based on courtesy and professional behaviour.
31. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct, but Ofsted also expects providers to:
- be courteous and professional
  - apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
  - enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
  - enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the standards/framework
  - provide evidence that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about the provision in their college
  - work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
  - ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
  - maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team



- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner.

## Communication and feedback

32. Inspectors will provide regular opportunities for dialogue with staff and feedback to senior staff during the inspection. They will feed back orally about the inspection findings to the principal or the head of residential services (as determined by the college) at the end of the inspection. They will be clear about whether the college meets all of the national minimum standards and, if not, which ones have not been met and why.

## Confidentiality

33. Ofsted will take all appropriate steps to ensure that information provided to inspectors remains confidential. However, evidence gathered during inspections may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, although the identity of named individuals will not be disclosed. Where Ofsted considers that any information provided by children indicates the likelihood of harm, the necessary information will be passed to the local authority children's services or the police for action.

## The evaluation schedule for inspection

34. The *Evaluation schedule for inspections of residential provision in colleges* sets out in detail the judgements that inspectors will make and the evidence they will consider in reaching these judgements. The evaluation schedule also provides detailed grade descriptors to guide inspectors in arriving at their judgements.
35. The evaluation schedule is summarised below. Inspectors will make five inspection judgements, which are:
  - Overall effectiveness
  - Outcomes for young people
  - Quality of service
  - Safeguarding
  - Leadership and management.

## Overall effectiveness

36. In reaching a judgement about Overall effectiveness, inspectors will consider evidence and judgements from the four contributory judgements in the evaluation schedule and consider the impact that this has on the young people in residence. They will also take into account the views of all interested parties, and the extent to which the national minimum standards are met.

## **Outcomes for young people**

37. In reaching a judgement about Outcomes for young people, inspectors will consider the progress learners make in their personal and social development, taking into account the starting points of the young people when they joined the college. Inspectors will talk to learners and take account of the views of all interested parties.
38. This section of the evaluation schedule does not refer directly to any of the individual national minimum standards, but summarises their impact on the learners' experience.

## **Quality of service**

39. In reaching a judgement about Quality of service, inspectors will consider the quality of pastoral support, care planning, extra-curricular and leisure activities, healthcare and catering arrangements, the quality of the residential accommodation, and the impact of these factors on residential learners' experiences.

## **Safeguarding**

40. In reaching a judgement about Safeguarding, inspectors will consider the college's arrangements for ensuring that learners in their care are safe and protected from harm. This section includes arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff, health and safety, child protection, anti-bullying strategies and behaviour policies. Inspectors will talk to residential learners and take account of the views of all interested parties.

## **Leadership and management**

41. In reaching a judgement about Leadership and management, inspectors will consider how effectively the residential environment is organised and managed for the benefit of the young people in the college's care. They will check that routines and procedures are clear, well-established and operate consistently to provide an orderly and safe community. They will talk to learners and staff and take account of their views. Inspectors will also look at policies, procedures and records, and assess the way the college evaluates its own residential provision and develops it for the benefit of the young people it serves.

## **Equality and diversity**

42. Issues of equality and diversity are crucially important to all aspects of the college's work and this is reflected in the evaluation schedule. Therefore, inspectors will not make a separate judgement on equality and diversity. Instead, they will consider the impact of the provision on the outcomes for all learners resident at the college when making all of their judgements. Reference to the college's practice with regard to matters of equality and diversity will be threaded throughout the report.

## **Making judgements**

43. Inspectors will make a judgement of outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate for each of the five aspects of the inspection, which will include an overarching grade for Overall effectiveness of the provision.
44. Inspectors are required to consider the balance of evidence for each aspect and its impact on the experience of, and outcomes for, learners. Before making a final judgement, inspectors will refer to the grade descriptors for outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate when considering the evidence they have gathered.
45. Inspectors will use their professional judgement and be guided by the grade descriptors in reaching a judgement. Judgements are not made by using a formulaic approach.
46. Colleges are expected to comply with the relevant national minimum standards and statutory guidance. However, failure to meet all the requirements in full will not necessarily result in an automatic judgement of inadequate. Inspectors will consider how serious the failure is and its impact on the learners' welfare, health, safety and experience of the accommodation.
47. The inspection report will state clearly any national minimum standard that has not been met. Inspectors will check that the college has corrected any areas of non-compliance at the next inspection.

## **Reports**

48. A report will be published after an inspection of residential provision. This also applies to the live pilot inspections.
49. The draft inspection report will be sent to the college within 10 working days of the end of the inspection for a factual accuracy check.
50. The principal or head of residential provision must return the draft inspection report with any comments on factual accuracy within three working days. The final report will be published on the Ofsted website within 20 working days of the end of the inspection, irrespective of appeals or complaints.
51. Monitoring reports for residential inspections will report on the extent to which the college has made satisfactory progress in correcting its weaknesses since its last inspection.

## **Quality assurance**

52. We assure the quality of our inspections and reports by ensuring that inspectors are suitably trained and experienced in inspecting residential provision. The lead inspector has responsibility for ensuring that all evidence gathered, including by team members, is robust, reliable and secure.

53. For national consistency, some inspections will be visited by an inspector from Ofsted to support the quality assurance process. During these visits, the visiting inspector will speak to the inspector, principal and other staff and, where possible, learners. The visiting inspector will always seek views from the staff at the college on the conduct of the inspection and sample the way that evidence is being gathered, collated and used to make judgements.
54. All inspection reports are subject to rigorous quality assurance procedures.
55. After the inspection, Ofsted will invite the principal to complete a short evaluation of the inspection. The responses will be used to improve the quality of our inspections.

## **How do colleges complain about their inspection or inspection report?**

56. Any concerns the college has about the inspection should be raised with the lead inspector during the inspection and, where possible, resolved. Concerns may also be raised with a quality assurance inspector should one have been allocated to the inspection. If the concerns are not resolved by these means, or the person expressing the concern does not feel that due weight is being given to the concerns, or an independent view is sought, then the person raising the concern, or someone acting on their behalf, should contact the Ofsted helpline on 0300 123 1231.
57. Similarly, any concerns the college has about the inspection report should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible.
58. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns raised then individuals or colleges may decide to lodge a formal complaint. The complaints procedures are available on our website at:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/complaints-procedure-raising-concerns-and-making-complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/complaints-procedure-raising-concerns-and-making-complaints-about-ofsted).

## **More information**

59. We hope that colleges will find this document useful in helping to prepare for inspection. Queries about individual inspections should be discussed with the lead inspector at first contact. General queries about the inspection of boarding or residential provision in colleges may be emailed to [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or made in writing to:

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