

Conducting inspections of residential provision for learners aged under 18 in further education colleges

Guidance for inspecting residential provision in further education colleges in England

This guidance is designed to assist inspectors when conducting inspections of residential provision in colleges. It should be read in conjunction with 'The framework for inspecting residential provision in further education colleges' and the 'Evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential provision in further education colleges'.

It informs colleges about how we inspect the residential provision they make for young people in their care.

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Introduction

1. This guidance is designed to assist Ofsted inspectors when conducting inspections of residential provision in colleges in England. Colleges can also use the guidance to see how inspections are conducted.
2. This document should be read in conjunction with 'The framework for inspecting residential provision in further education colleges'¹ and the 'Evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential provision in further education colleges'.² This guidance applies to further education colleges and sixth form colleges.
3. An inspection of residential provision is normally conducted once in a three-year cycle. However, from January 2015, if a college's provision is judged as requires improvement or inadequate following an inspection, they will be re-inspected within two years. The inspection of residential provision is normally undertaken separately from the inspection of the educational provision.
4. The term 'young people' in this guidance refers to learners aged under 18.

The inspectors

5. The inspection of residential provision is led by a social care regulatory inspector from Ofsted. All inspectors are suitably experienced and trained to inspect the welfare of residential learners in colleges. They have particular expertise in safeguarding children. The size and composition of the inspection team are determined by the size and location of the residential provision for learners aged under 18. The timing of the inspection takes account of the date and outcome of the previous inspection and any relevant risk assessment.

Length of inspection

6. Inspections will last two or three days on site.

Pre-inspection activity

7. Ofsted uses an online questionnaire to obtain the views of residential learners, their parents or carers and staff in the residential provision. Learners, parents, carers and staff will be able to submit their views about the college's residential provision online for a three-month period each year. We will ask colleges to

¹ *Inspecting residential provision in further education colleges – framework* (120091), Ofsted, 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-framework-for-inspecting-residential-provision-in-further-education-colleges.

² *Inspecting residential provision in further education colleges: evaluation schedule* (120092), Ofsted, 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-schedule-for-the-inspection-of-residential-provision-in-further-education-colleges.

inform learners, parents, carers and staff about the questionnaires and encourage their completion.

8. The key messages from the online surveys will be discussed with the college during the inspection.
9. Ofsted will also send a standard letter to the local authority designated officer for child protection (LADO) to ask about any information they have about the college. The letter requests information about child protection enquiries relating to the college that are ongoing or have been undertaken since the last inspection. The LADO is asked to send any information by secure email directly to the lead inspector.

Notice of inspection and pre-inspection contact with colleges

10. Ofsted will usually give up to three hours' notice of the inspection. The lead inspector will telephone the nominated contact at 9am on the morning of inspection and the inspection will usually start at 12pm the same day. The lead inspector will confirm the call by emailing a formal 'notification of inspection' letter to the college. If email contact is not possible, the lead inspector will ask the further education and skills policy team to email the letter on their behalf.
11. At the initial telephone call the lead inspector should speak to the principal or, if this is not possible, the member of staff in charge of the residential provision. The telephone call and email confirmation will inform the college of:
 - the start and end dates of the inspection
 - the names of the lead and other inspectors (if applicable)
 - brief information about the inspection process and how to obtain key documents from our website and links to the national minimum standards³ and Ofsted's complaints procedure.
12. Colleges are not expected to prepare additional documentation for inspectors. Requests will be kept to a minimum, but will include a copy of the relevant sections of the college's self-assessment and any improvement plan the college has made in relation to its residential provision. Inspectors will accept the self-assessment and any improvement plan in whatever format they are presented. Inspectors will ask the college to complete a questionnaire with details about its residential provision.

³ *Accommodation of students under eighteen by further education colleges: national minimum standards, inspection regulations*, Department of Health, 2002:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20071001175105/dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4005629.

13. The inspector will forward the indicative timetable of the inspection for the college to complete. This is intended to help both the college and inspectors make best use of inspection time. It indicates the interviews/discussions that the inspector(s) will need to hold, the intended outcomes, the national minimum standards that will be covered in the meetings and the relevant records, policies and documents that inspectors will need to see.
14. The college is asked to fill in the name(s) of the relevant members of residential staff and the time when it is convenient to meet them. There is no set order for interviews, although it is very helpful to inspectors if interviews concerning safeguarding matters can be arranged for the first afternoon or early on the second day.

Using the pre-inspection information

15. In preparing for the inspection, the inspector(s) will look at the information that Ofsted already holds or is publicly available about the college or its residential provision, which includes:
 - previous inspection reports
 - any concerns and complaints received
 - the college's own website, which may already contain residential policies and procedures and may also provide dates when the residential learners may be away from college, for example on a field trip
 - the analysis of views of residential learners, parents and carers and staff from Ofsted's online questionnaires, where available
 - any information on referrals, notifications or child protection concerns.
16. The lead inspector will analyse the available evidence and record the evidence and analysis in the appropriate planning form. They will use this information to plan the inspection and identify lines of enquiry, any areas of apparent weakness or significant strength, or areas where further evidence needs to be gathered. The focus of the inspection may change during its course as further evidence emerges.
17. Where the inspector has concerns, these will be raised with the principal or the person in charge of the residential provision. An open dialogue between the college and inspector(s) is essential during inspection and good communication is encouraged at all times.
18. Inspectors' planning notes will form part of the inspection evidence and should be submitted alongside any other pertinent documents following the inspection.

Inspection activity

19. At the start of the inspection the inspector(s) will present their official Ofsted proof of identity badge. This confirms that inspector(s) have been approved by Ofsted to have contact with young people. Inspectors will not carry paper copies of Disclosure and Barring Service checks.
20. The lead inspector will meet the principal and/or the member of staff in charge of residential provision at the start of the inspection to confirm the practical arrangements for the inspection and ensure that it is planned effectively and makes best use of time. The meeting should last no longer than an hour and should include any relevant information that inspectors need to be aware of while they are on site, such as any health and safety issues or sensitive personnel issues. The meeting should also be used to explore with senior staff the college's aims and reasons for offering residential provision and how they are achieved. The lead inspector should also ensure that the college is clear about the changes Ofsted has made to its practice with regard to the inspection of residential provision.

During the inspection

21. Inspection activities will include:
 - listening and talking to residential learners
 - observing interactions between staff and residential learners
 - discussions with key staff including those with responsibility for leading, managing and organising residential provision or key elements of it
 - checking on progress in response to national minimum standards which were previously not met (if any)
 - sampling meals and observing mealtime routines
 - examining relevant policies and procedures and observing how they are implemented
 - examining records, for example concerning health care and recruitment
 - looking at residential learners' records, case files, tutorial files and other relevant documents
 - liaising by telephone with social workers from relevant local authorities that may have placed residential learners in the college (if any)
 - inspecting the premises, accommodation, facilities and procedures for ensuring health and safety arrangements.

Listening and talking to learners

22. The views and experiences of residential learners are at the centre of the inspection and provide key evidence in assessing outcomes against the evaluation schedule.
23. Inspectors should involve the learners in inspection activity wherever they can.
24. Inspectors will demonstrate safe and sensitive practice by:
 - ensuring that staff are aware of any arranged meetings with residential learners and that the participation of the learners in meetings is voluntary
 - being sensitive to the fact that some learners may not want to be involved in the inspection
 - explaining to learners that interviews are confidential and they will not be identified in the inspection report or in any feedback given to the college; however, inspectors must report any safeguarding issues or disclosures
 - explaining to learners that information suggesting that they or another young person is at risk of harm will be passed by the inspector to an appropriate person able to take necessary action about that concern
 - taking into account the specific communication needs of the residential learners; for some, the inspectors may request the assistance of staff who know and understand the learner's preferred means of communication.
25. It will also be appropriate for inspectors to spend time observing learners and how they interact with staff and respond to their environment. Much of the learners' experience of the residential provision takes place after the academic day and it is therefore essential that inspectors are present at this time.
26. Inspectors will select the learners they wish to meet. They will want to meet representatives of the different groups of learners that make up the residential community. The inspectors and the college should ensure that every learner who wishes to speak to an inspector has the chance to do so. Inspectors will ask the college to arrange for them to meet a group or groups of residential learners. They should also engage others in conversation, but they should avoid interviewing learners alone and away from others unless there are specific reasons for doing so.
27. Inspectors will always ask the learners about bullying and will explore these issues with them, particularly where it has been raised by the residential learners or their parents or carers through the online questionnaire. Inspectors will discuss all types of bullying with the young people, including cyber-bullying, homophobic language, racism, harassment, name-calling or isolation of individual or groups of young people. They may also ask young people about steps taken to protect them from the risk of extremism or radicalisation.

28. Inspectors will observe how residential learners interact with one another and with staff. Inspectors will be alert to issues of equality and diversity, ensuring that all residential learners have equal access to the opportunities and support that the residential experience affords and that each learner's individual needs are looked after. Inspectors will explore thoroughly any concerns that the different groups of learners who make up the residential community may have.

'Tracking' individual welfare arrangements

29. In order to build up a more rounded picture of the quality of support and provision for individuals' needs, inspectors will examine the welfare records from a range of different information sources relating to a small number of residential learners. The records of individual learners should be selected at random by the inspector from the college's lists.
30. Any key welfare issues that arise from examining residential learners' records should be raised with senior staff in the college.
31. The college's response to any welfare issues identified should be considered in the light of the relevant college policies and the national minimum standards.

Inspecting the residential accommodation and facilities

32. The inspectors are required to judge the suitability of the college's premises and residential accommodation. If practicable, during the course of the inspection, inspectors will visit all the residential units, but the amount of time spent in each will vary. Inspectors may ask to be accompanied by residential learners on the tour of the accommodation. When touring premises or grounds, inspectors may take the opportunity to speak to staff or learners they meet.
33. Where the college arranges for and accommodates learners in lodgings during term-time instead of on-site accommodation, the suitability of this accommodation and the welfare of learners in this accommodation should be assessed during the course of the inspection. Inspectors will:
 - spend time with the college's member of staff responsible for lodging
 - examine the college's written guidance to host families
 - sample written agreements between the college and adults providing lodgings
 - discuss with the college their arrangements for monitoring their lodgings
 - look at any records of monitoring and training of host families
 - visit a sample of lodgings, where appropriate.
34. Inspectors may see a number of extra-curricular or leisure activities and spend time talking to residential learners about their experiences, including, where relevant, what happens at weekends. Inspectors will establish the quality of

study or recreation areas and how the residential experience helps the learners to learn and develop.

Meals taken with learners

35. Inspectors should take a selection of meals with residential learners at their tables and observe the serving arrangements. This provides direct evidence of catering provision and arrangements, and provides an opportunity to observe general behaviour and to speak informally to learners in a communal setting. Inspectors will evaluate how dietary needs such as vegetarian or other specialist requirements are met. Inspectors should also speak to the catering manager and ask to see a sample of menus.

Safeguarding concerns

36. If serious issues of concern arise, for example in relation to the failure to follow child protection procedures and/or where a learner is discovered to be at immediate risk of harm, the principal will be notified as soon as possible unless this compromises the learner's safety. Inspectors should always follow 'Ofsted's safeguarding policy and procedures'⁴ and contact Ofsted's compliance, investigation and enforcement team on 0300 123 1231 should they be in need of advice.

Recording evidence

37. All inspection findings must be supported by evidence. Throughout the inspection, inspectors will maintain a record of their evidence. Inspectors need to record interview notes on evidence forms in black ink so that it can be photocopied if necessary. Handwritten evidence must be legible and must only be recorded on copies of the national minimum standards check sheet or appropriate evidence form.
38. In addition to recording notes from interviews, inspectors must ensure that they record any national minimum standards that the college has not met, with the supporting evidence in the appropriate evidence form.
39. Inspectors can also use the 'National minimum standards check sheet and evidence form'⁵ to record any evidence and will submit this along with any other inspection evidence
40. Lead inspectors will submit **electronic** summarised evidence in the form of Word documents through the Inspection Team Room in OfficeBase. The summarised evidence will include evidence collected pre-inspection, during the inspection and post inspection.

⁴ *Ofsted safeguarding policy* (150004), Ofsted, July 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy

⁵ *Inspecting residential provision in further education colleges - evidence form*, Ofsted, February 2013;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-minimum-standards-check-sheet-and-evidence-form.

41. Evidence should be clear, evaluative and sufficient for the purpose of supporting the judgements. Evidence should not include anything that could identify individual staff, young people or family members, unless necessary for the protection of a child. Inspectors can record direct quotes from learners, parents or carers and stakeholders in evidence to support judgements, although evidence should never use individuals' names, initials or anything that could lead to individuals being identified.

Inspection findings

42. Inspection has the strongest impact on improvement when the college understands how the evidence and findings have led to the judgements. The lead inspector will therefore ensure that the principal and senior residential staff:
- are kept up to date with how the inspection is proceeding
 - understand how inspectors reach judgements
 - have opportunities to clarify how evidence is used to reach judgements
 - are given the opportunity to present additional evidence relevant to the inspection.
43. The evaluation schedule sets out grade descriptors for outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate inspection outcomes and also for quality of service, safeguarding and effectiveness of leadership and management. Inspectors will refer to the evaluation schedule when determining grades.

Inspection feedback

44. During the inspection, inspectors will share emerging findings about the college's key strengths and weaknesses on a regular, planned basis with senior staff from the college. Issues that could have an immediate impact on the safety of young people will be brought to the attention of the principal or the member of staff in charge of residential provision as soon as the inspector has identified the problem. The inspector will ask the college for an immediate action plan to remedy the issue.
45. At the end of the inspection, the inspectors meet the principal and/or person in charge of residential provision to give verbal feedback on the main inspection findings and provisional judgements. The principal/person in charge of residential provision may wish to invite the governors, proprietor or senior staff, as appropriate, to attend this meeting. In exceptional circumstances, an inspector may need additional time after the inspection fieldwork to take advice before giving feedback.
46. As the college will have been kept informed of the developing judgements, feedback should:

- be professional and concise
- state the key grades and the main findings of the inspection against the evaluation schedule, including both strengths and areas for improvement
- briefly provide examples of the underpinning evidence to indicate how inspectors have arrived at the judgements
- detail any national minimum standards that have not been met and explain why
- indicate the likely points for improvement
- be balanced and include positive comments as well as highlighting any areas for development
- use the grade descriptors as detailed in the evaluation schedule to indicate how inspectors have arrived at the judgements
- make clear that the grades awarded are provisional and may be subject to change through the quality assurance process
- confirm that the report will be sent to the college in draft for comments on factual accuracy and indicate the procedures and timeline leading to publication of the report.

Sending in the evidence from the inspection

47. The inspector(s) must not retain any handwritten notes, evidence forms or completed questionnaires after the inspection. These documents form part of the evidence base and must be passed to the lead inspector at the end of the inspection. The lead inspector will send the evidence base by recorded post to Ofsted's Evidence Collection Team immediately after the inspection, where it will be retained in accordance with Ofsted's retention policy, unless required for handling a complaint. The lead inspector must ensure that the analysis of views of residential learners, parents, carers and staff from the online questionnaires is included in the evidence base. Evidence that has been entered into the national minimum standards check sheet will also be retained in accordance with Ofsted's retention policy.

Requires improvement and inadequate colleges

48. Where the inspection has judged the residential provision of a college to be requires improvement or inadequate, Ofsted will carry out a monitoring visit within six months of the inspection to report on the college's progress against the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. Further guidance

on Ofsted's approach to these monitoring visits is set out in 'Support and challenge for residential provision in further education colleges'.⁶

Publication

49. The further education and skills policy team will forward the inspection report to the college. The college is given two working days in which to comment on any factual errors in the report and any inaccuracies will be forwarded by the further education and skills policy team to the lead inspector.
50. If the report has been amended to correct any factual errors, a final report is sent by the further education and skills policy team to the college. Once finalised, the report is normally published within 20 working days of the end of the inspection.

Concerns

51. It is anticipated that the great majority of inspections will be carried out without any concerns on the part of the college.
52. Inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and code of conduct set out in 'The framework for inspecting residential provision in further education colleges'.
53. During an inspection, the college's main contact person should raise any concerns with the lead inspector as soon as they arise, so that they can be resolved as quickly as possible. The lead inspector will consider the concern and do all that is possible to remedy the problem.

Complaints

54. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns then the college can lodge a formal complaint. Normally, a complaint can be made at any stage during an inspection or up to 10 working days from the date of publication of any report. Complaints should normally be made in writing by post or email; however, Ofsted will accept complaints by telephone. We will not normally take any formal action from a telephone complaint until we have agreed a written account of the complaint with the complainant.
55. The complaints procedure, which sets out how providers or users can complain about their inspection and what will happen to their complaint, is set out in 'Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted'.⁷

⁶ *Support and challenge for residential provision in further education colleges* (150094), Ofsted, July 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-and-challenge-for-residential-provision-in-further-education-colleges

⁷ *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* (130128), Ofsted, April 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted.

56. Lodging a complaint will not normally delay publication of the final inspection report.