Loughborough College

Loughborough College of Further Education, Radmoor Road, LOUGHBOROUGH, Leicestershire LE11 3BT

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Loughborough College and SMB College Group merged in August 2025. This created the newly formed Loughborough College Group. The newly merged college provides further education on campuses across Leicestershire. The college provides a range of courses, including A levels, T levels and vocational courses for school leavers, elite sports and land-based studies. The college also provides higher education, apprenticeships and professional qualifications.

The college provides residential provision at 2 of the campus sites and homestay accommodation is operated from another campus. The residential accommodation comprises of single rooms with en-suite facilities. Young people will self-cater, but there is a refectory provision at one site.

Most students staying at the Loughborough campus are elite athletes. They undertake a dual pathway that balances high-performance sport with academic achievement. The accommodation offers independent living skills and wellbeing support for students while they pursue their chosen academic, vocational or sports pathway.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 October 2026

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in 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: 14 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Summary of findings

Young people who stay in the residential provision or with homestay families receive highly individualised care and support to help them succeed in their chosen academic or training pathway. Young people who reside in the residential provision are elite athletes who manage demanding training programmes alongside their academic work. The young people receive excellent holistic support that enables them to do very well in their chosen academic studies and sporting disciplines.

The relationships between young people and staff are strong and nurturing. Young people can confide in staff and know they will be listened to and helped.

Young people are safe and protected by the residential staff. They reside in an environment that is kept safe and secure. The residential staff know where the young people are and there are no concerns over behaviour or young people going missing from the residential provision. Young people's emotional and mental health are a priority for the residential accommodation staff and they remain vigilant to any changes in how the young people may present.

The leadership and management of the residential provision is excellent. Leaders and managers are dedicated, highly visible and committed to providing high-quality care and support. They have established a strong culture that prioritises young people's welfare and safety and they strive towards young people achieving their ambitions.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: outstanding

College leaders, managers and governors have worked extremely hard to ensure that the merger of Loughborough and SMB group colleges has been a success. The integration was seamless and carefully planned to ensure there was no disruption to young people's education or training. College staff and external agencies have highlighted the beneficial impact of the merger to improving young people's educational and training outcomes.

The young people, both in the residential provision and homestay, receive exceptional holistic support to achieve their educational or sporting goals. Those participating in elite sports and on the dual pathway receive high-quality care and support from a network of coaches, mentors and residential accommodation staff. These professionals work collaboratively to provide young people with consistent support, challenge and encouragement to help them succeed. This coordinated approach keeps young people focused and helps them to overcome barriers and setbacks to make sustained progress during their time at the college.

A real strength is the excellent communication between the residential accommodation staff and the wider teaching and sports coaches and mentors. Regular meetings between the professionals ensure that the young person's individual plans have clear and measurable targets that are being met. When young people are struggling, should this be related to their chosen sports or education pathway, additional help and support are quickly put in place. This is often wide ranging and may include physiotherapy, sports psychology, nutrition or emotional support. For example, one young person who is a triathlete was able to access additional swimming support through coaching and resources at the local university. His parent stated, 'Attending the college has been the making of him; he has matured so much.'

College leaders and staff strive to find new and innovative ways to support the young people. For example, young people can use social media in a variety of ways and can follow the college therapy dog to find out about support or help, if required. This has proven to be a far more effective way to engage young people and let them know how and where to access the support they may need.

Homestay provision continues to develop and expand. Leaders and managers safely recruit families to meet the growing demand. Engagement with employers and opportunities for more apprenticeships have been excellent. Feedback from employers and parents is overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the very high quality of care and support provided. Attendance and engagement remain exceptionally strong, with young people achieving 100% attendance.

Young people in residential achieve better educational outcomes than day students, with a 95% pass rate for their chosen academic course. Young people staying in

residential benefit from additional study opportunities. Their college attendance is better and residential accommodation staff remain highly vigilant in ensuring that young people remain on track to meet their targets. Additional support is quickly drafted in when required.

The residential accommodation staff and young people have excellent relationships. The residential staff are caring, nurturing and constantly available to support the young people. If young people become ill or cannot attend their sport through injury, the accommodation officers stay with them, check them regularly and provide very good support. This is acknowledged by parents, who were unanimously positive and grateful to the residential accommodation staff. One parent said, 'As a parent, to know your child is away from home but cared for so well is so reassuring.'

How well young people are helped and protected: outstanding

The leaders and managers have established a strong safeguarding culture across the residential and homestay provisions. Leaders, managers and residential staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities very well. They understand what action to take if they have any concerns over the safety and welfare of young people.

The grounds and residential provision are safe and secure. The grounds are gated at one campus but, across all campuses, there is regular monitoring and checking by residential accommodation staff and security. The residential accommodation staff are proactive and liaise with families, as required, to ensure that young people remain safe. There are robust procedures if any young person were to go missing. Parents and families are fully informed of any incidents regarding their young person and their whereabouts. This is because the residential accommodation staff remain highly vigilant.

Staff working in the residential provision are recruited through safer recruitment processes that are strong and effective. Careful and diligent attention is given to every stage of the recruitment process, with comprehensive checks undertaken to ensure that staff are safe to work with young people. Designated safeguarding leads are involved in the interviewing and recruitment process. They have undertaken specific training in safer recruitment. New staff only get to work in the residential provision when leaders are satisfied that they are safe to do so.

The residential provision and homestay provision are very settled and young people's behaviour is very good. Concerns regarding young people's behaviour are rare. When concerns have arisen, the managers and staff have acted quickly and appropriately. The young people focus on their academic and sporting programmes and there are no concerns with substance misuse and young people have not gone missing.

The network of professionals supporting young people are acutely aware of the pressures on young people to achieve in elite sports while simultaneously

undertaking academic work. Consequently, staff monitor how young people are coping and any changes to mood or behaviour. If changes are observed, residential staff provide young people with timely and effective support.

Young people and staff have developed very positive and trusting relationships. As a result, young people are confident to confide in staff and seek the support and guidance they need. The young people have a network of professionals and staff who provide highly individualised care and support with every aspect of the young person's development. This helps them to remain safe while achieving their aims and objectives.

Many young people take part in elite sports. This can involve representing their countries and a great deal of international travel. Those young people travelling abroad receive a very high level of support from college staff. There is enhanced support arrangements agreed with the sport's governing bodies to ensure that young people are supported, kept safe and given every opportunity to succeed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The residential provision is led by a dedicated leadership team. The leadership team has remained stable throughout the college merger, providing strong and consistent leadership during a period of significant change. The staff stated that they felt included in this change and that their views mattered. The leadership team has been unwavering in their commitment to ensuring that the merger and changes did not interrupt the academic, training and sporting progress of young people.

The leaders and manager have a clear and ambitious development strategy, including the investment in, and enhancement of, the college's buildings, as well as further expansion of its residential and homestay provision for young people. This is an exciting time for the college, with a strong sense of purpose and optimism about its future direction for the residential and homestay provision.

Governors hold the college principal and senior leaders to account. The link governor for the residential provision visits the accommodation regularly and speaks to young people to obtain their views. Leaders report to governors on all aspects of the college, including the residential provision and safeguarding. The reports provide qualitative information as well as setting out operational and strategic objectives going forward. This keeps governors well informed about the residential provision and safeguarding.

The college has particularly strong partnerships with national and international sports governing bodies, including athletics, rugby and international organisations. These organisations report that they hold the college in high regard due to the outstanding quality of facilities and opportunities for young people.

New staff working in the residential provision undergo a detailed and thorough induction programme. The induction programme is regularly reviewed to make

certain they are on track with their training and development. Staff also have very regular reviews of their boarding practice. These sessions are guided by a good agenda that focuses on the outcomes for young people and the support needs of staff. The staff in the residential provision can also access support from a psychologist, if required, to provide them with additional support.

Leaders and managers provide exceptional oversight of the residential provision. They are visible, approachable and well known to the young people. There is an open-door culture throughout the residential provision that ensures that leaders remain accessible to the young people and staff. The college principal takes a very active approach, making herself readily available to respond to any concerns or issues.

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: SC043659
Principal/CEO: Mrs Corrie Harris

Inspectors

Phillip Morris, Social Care Inspector
Anver Rose, Social Care Inspector
Sarah Orriss, Social Care Inspector

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