

# Peter Symonds College

Inspection report for further education college

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<b>Setting address</b>	Peter Symonds College, Owens Road, WINCHESTER, Hampshire, SO22 6RX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01962 857500
<b>Email</b>	principal@psc.ac.uk

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## Information about the college

Peter Symonds is a 6th Form college for students aged between 16 & 19 years which is located in the city of Winchester. There are two distinct and separate co-educational boarding houses located on the campus which between them can accommodate up to 80 students. Both houses are purpose built with one dating back to Victorian times while the other was constructed in 1997. The college does not arrange any lodgings with host families for students. A head of boarding oversees the residential provision with residential and day house parents providing 24 hour support for residential students. The college has long established links with the armed forces and the Falkland Islands, with applications from students with these connections being given priority for the residential provision. The college was last inspected during May 2010.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

**Adequate:** a service that only meets minimum requirements

**Inadequate:** a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Summary report

<b>Overall effectiveness of the provision</b>	outstanding
Outcomes for young people	outstanding
Quality of service	outstanding
Leadership and management	outstanding
Safeguarding	outstanding

## Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

The overall effectiveness of the college's residential provision for students is outstanding. There are significant strengths in all areas and all of the national minimum standards are either being met or exceeded. Students thoroughly enjoy the

residential experience and derive great benefit both educationally and in their personal and social development while being there. The college provides remarkable support for students in relation to both their individual welfare and their learning. The overall academic achievements of students consistently exceed national averages.

Safeguarding arrangements at the college are excellent with residential students feeling extremely safe. Promoting and protecting the welfare of students is a vital and integral aspect of how the college operates, with policies and procedures supporting the implementation of safe working practices across all areas of college life. Communication between departments is exceedingly good and provides for highly effective monitoring of individual students and their welfare.

Residential accommodation at the college provides an inclusive and supportive environment where the individual needs of all students are extremely well met. Relationships between students and between students and staff are remarkably positive and contribute highly effectively to the convivial and respectful atmosphere that exists in both residential houses. Residential students feel totally integrated within the wider student body and there is excellent provision across the college for the promotion of equality and diversity.

The college has a very clear commitment to the continuing improvement of the services it provides for all of its students, with rigorous self-evaluation and a clear development plan specific to the provision for residential students. All three of the recommendations from the previous inspection report have been satisfactorily addressed and there have been a number of other improvements carried out. These include the introduction of a 'boarding student review', improved information being provided for prospective residential students, additional CCTV coverage external to the residential houses, and an electronic lunch ticket system specifically for residential students.

### **Outcomes for young people**

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Outcomes for residential students at the college are outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy the experience of being resident and have a very strong affiliation with the houses that they live in. Both houses provide a wholly inclusive environment where students have remarkably positive relationships with both fellow residential students and with the house-parents who look after them. There is a palpable sense of harmony within the residential houses and students are extremely supportive of one another. 'I love it', 'we are very close knit', and 'it's like a family' were some of the comments received from students when asked what being a residential student was like. Students feel totally safe within the residential environment, their behaviour is exemplary and they feel they are very fairly treated by staff. They also feel that they are able to express their views freely and influence events within the houses. Elected representatives meet regularly with the head of boarding and holding a 'Bond Night' to coincide with the release of the new James Bond film is one example of students

being listened to.

The residential environment at the college contributes highly effectively to the personal development of students and to their educational progress. They acknowledge becoming more confident and independent, and statistics show that the educational achievements of residential students are very high by national standards. All residential students take part in the extensive enrichment activities programme provided by the college and have access to dedicated evening sessions. Sporting activities contribute positively to students' fitness levels and recent increased attendance at multi-gym sessions has led to an additional session being provided at week-ends. Residential students have a strong involvement in raising money for charity and have provided volunteers who help at a local shelter for the homeless. Students have also participated in the 'Race for Life' event and are actively involved in raising money for a local children's hospice. Students feel extremely well supported in making choices and preparing for their future in employment or continuing education, with dedicated guidance provided via a careers management programme.

### **Quality of service**

The quality of the service is **outstanding**.

Residential students at the college receive an outstanding quality of care. There is a comprehensive process of induction which students comment very positively on. This allows them to get to meet key staff, familiarise themselves with both the college and the local environment and to receive excellent written and verbal information from both college staff and external bodies such as the police. All new residential students have an outing to a theme park soon after arrival in order to socialise and get to know fellow students. They are able to choose which house they would like to live in and also for those in shared rooms, who they would like to share with.

Support available to students across the college is remarkable. Students services are located in the centre of the campus and provide information, guidance and support on an extensive range of topics, there is easy access to professional counsellors based on campus, a registered nurse is available during the educational day, there is a sexual health clinic held on-site, and a practice nurse from the local surgery runs an evening clinic once a week specifically for residential students. House parents are all first-aid qualified and the residential provision has an excellent working relationship with the local general practitioner surgery. Health awareness across the college is exceedingly good with regular campaigns being run and students participating in national awareness days and fund raising events such as the 'Race for Life'.

Communication across the college is exceptionally good in relation to residential students and the ability to provide the necessary care and support, and be able to effectively monitor the welfare of individual students. The 'boarding intranet' facilitates the appropriate sharing of information between departments and both the residential and education settings. The system allows for the referral to specific

support services, and the ability to update and closely monitor any welfare concerns as well as the implementation of individual care plans. The college provides excellent specialist support for any students who may require additional help because of a medical condition, learning difficulties, disabilities, or if English is not their first language. Support for residential students is exceedingly good and they have a range of people they can go to with any concerns or personal problems. These include personal tutors, student services, the counselling service, the head of boarding, and residential and day house parents who are available 24 hours a day.

The college strives for academic excellence and has high aspirations for all of its students. The learning resource centre is open to residential students during the evenings and both residential houses provide quiet periods during the evening which help to facilitate study. All students at the college enrol in an enrichment programme which provides access to an extensive range of activities. There is access to a multi-gym and sports hall for residential students during evenings and weekends, the college has a number of sporting teams which students can join, and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme operates within the college. There is easy access to a wide range of local community facilities and some students are attending dance classes. Staff also make provision during evenings and weekends for those students who play musical instruments and wish to practice.

Both residential houses provide accommodation for students of a high standard, which is extremely well maintained and fully supports their learning and their personal development. A large number of rooms are single with en suite facilities and all rooms make provision for study purposes. Communal rooms provide a comfortable and welcoming environment for socialising and are very well used by students who fully appreciate and respect the environment and who identify strongly with the house that they live in. The catering provision at the college is excellent, providing students with healthy and nutritious meals of a very high quality using fresh and locally sourced produce as much as possible. Special dietary needs are well catered for. Well equipped kitchens within each residential house also provide students with the facility to prepare snacks and drinks for themselves. All residential students attend 'dining in' events held each term which involve wearing formal dress and which are attended by the college principal and senior staff. These events are greatly enjoyed by students.

Residential students feel very much that they have a voice in the college and can influence matters affecting them. There are weekly house meetings held and two elected boarding representatives from each house meet regularly with the head of boarding. In addition there is a post within the student union allocated to a residential student, a representative from each tutor group across the college makes up the student 'parliament', and there are two student representatives on the governing body. There is good provision for students to be able to maintain contact with their families and friends. There are phones in each house as well as internet access which provides the facility to have visual electronic communication.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management are **outstanding**.

Leadership and management of the residential provision at the college is outstanding. Well established operational systems are highly effective in ensuring the residential houses run very smoothly on a day to day basis, and that they provide a well ordered and safe community. The college provides both students and their parents with exceedingly good information about the residential provision and the principles and practice under which it operates, both written and via a very informative website. There is a very clear culture within the college of having high aspirations for individual students in all that they do, with educational achievement consistently exceeding national averages and the college being judged to be 'Outstanding' in all areas at the most recent Ofsted education inspection. This aspiration for excellence permeates all aspects of college life, including the residential provision.

Rigorous self-assessment takes place annually across the college and informs the overall operational plan as well as a development plan specific to the residential provision. A very strong commitment to maintaining excellence and continuing improvement has seen the recommendations from the previous inspection addressed and a significant number of further improvements being made. These include some significant improvements to the residential accommodation, site security, access to the internet, student induction, and the on-going information provided for parents.

Staffing arrangements are excellent with residential and day house parents providing 24 hour support for students within the residential accommodation. House parents contribute greatly to the atmosphere within the residential houses and thoroughly enjoy their work with the students. 'It's like one big happy family' was a comment received from one house parent. House parents possess a wealth of experience and are very well qualified and trained to meet the needs of students, with a significant number working as teachers within the college. The head of boarding manages the residential provision remarkably well, providing an extremely effective oversight and a clearly defined link between operational practice and the senior management of the college. Staff receive excellent support and have easy access to comprehensive and up to date policies and procedures which support and promote good practice across the college.

All college policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and approved by the governing body that plays a very active role in all aspects of college life. Exceedingly good systems of communication across the college provide for the highly effective monitoring of individual students and their welfare. There is excellent communication with parents who receive regular 'progress' and newly introduced 'boarding' reviews via the extremely successful boarding intranet. The practice of promoting equality and diversity and ensuring equal opportunities are embedded in the college culture and are duly considered and planned for as part of the admissions process. In addition the operational plan for the college includes details of the college's 'Single

Equality Scheme' and of objectives which accord with the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding arrangements are **outstanding**

Safeguarding provision for residential students at the college is outstanding. Student welfare is central to how the college operates and safe working practices are embedded within all aspects of college life. Students feel totally safe both within the residential environment and the wider college campus. An annually conducted survey of the most recent leavers recorded that 100% felt safe and secure boarding at the college. The residential provision provides an environment within which students are wholly supportive of one another and where there are always staff with whom they can share concerns with. Student welfare concerns are shared appropriately across the college via the exceedingly good 'boarding intranet' which provides for highly effective monitoring and referral to support services as necessary.

Students receive outstanding information, guidance and support in relation to 'staying safe'. An excellent leaflet provides detailed information on all aspects of personal safety, the police visit to talk to students during their induction, and all students are offered self-defence classes. Clear written guidance is also provided about what to look out for and what to do should students have any concerns about one of their fellow students. Expectations of students are made very clear to them by the college and they have responded remarkably well. The behaviour of residential students is exemplary with bullying not an issue, an extremely low level of any significant sanction being imposed, and no recorded formal complaints having been received since the previous inspection.

The college has a designated senior member of staff with responsibility for child protection as well as a significant number of deputies which include the head of boarding. All have completed training specific to the role and this is regularly updated at the required intervals. There are established links with the local safeguarding board and highly effective systems for monitoring the welfare of individual students. All staff cover safeguarding as part of their induction and there is a high level of awareness of child protection which is maintained across the college. Annual safeguarding reports are provided to the governing body and these show that there have been no child protection concerns in relation to the residential provision since the previous inspection.

Robust, comprehensive, and up-to-date policies and procedures support and promote good practice across the college, and are being highly effectively implemented. Recruitment procedures are rigorous and ensure all staff undergo the required checks before being allowed to work with students. Health and safety provision is excellent and ensures that the college provides a safe and secure environment for residential students. Closed circuit television monitors the college site and there is electronically controlled access to residential accommodation which also maintains a register of those present. There is always a staff presence within both residential houses and staff apply rigorous procedures for any students wishing



to stay out overnight.

Fire safety arrangements are excellent with students being provided with instructions as part of their induction and practice evacuations being held regularly. Members of the college estates team provide a 24 hour response system and there are comprehensive management plans in place for any foreseeable crisis. Robust procedures are applied highly effectively to the management of risk associated with the premises, and activities undertaken by students both on and off-site, including day visits and trips overseas. Regular safety checks take place within the residential provision, with wider audits being carried out also and close monitoring performed by a safety committee who report to the governing body.

## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of accommodation in further education colleges.