

# Farleigh Further Education College (Frome)

Farleigh Sixth Form College, North Parade, Frome, Somerset BA11 2AB

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

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

Farleigh Further Education College (Frome) is an independent specialist college providing post-16 education for students with autistic spectrum conditions, Asperger syndrome and associated complex needs, including mental health and behavioural difficulties.

The college offers day and residential placements. At the time of the inspection, 51 of the 74 students were residential and 12 were under the age of 18 years. The residential accommodation is located in eight properties in the community of Frome and two neighbouring towns. It is no longer on the same site as the college. At the time of this inspection, the main college building was undergoing a refurbishment and not in use, and had been replaced by temporary accommodation.

Inspection dates 4 to 6 December 2017

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

How well young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The college provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Date of last inspection:** 29 February 2012

## Key findings from this inspection

This college is good because:

- Students enjoy their residential experience, forming positive relationships with the staff and making friends. Students receive sensitive support to embrace new opportunities to support their progress socially, emotionally and with their learning.
- Residential staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the students' unique vulnerabilities. Relevant training supports them in meeting the students' needs.
- The multidisciplinary team provides a range of support to students. Therapists work closely with residential and academic staff and the senior leadership team.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Collaboration with parents and social care professionals ensures that prompt action is taken to protect and support students.
- Leaders and managers have taken action to improve and update the main college building, and have relocated all the residential accommodation off site. Leaders and managers have plans for improvement and are committed to identifying where lessons can be learned.

The college's areas for development:

- Improve the quality of records to enable leaders and managers to better monitor the strengths and areas of weakness. In particular, improve the records of complaints and behaviour management.
- The frequency of supervision is insufficient to demonstrate effective support and challenge to residential staff.
- Advocate for students to receive an independent return home interview after an incident of going missing.
- Ensure that, after a period of absence, students return to college as quickly as practicable.

## Inspection judgements

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

The college has experienced considerable change over the last six months. A restructure has led to changes in the senior leadership team and, since September 2017, all residential provision is in houses within local communities.

Leaders and managers have arranged a temporary 'village' of portable buildings on the land next door to the college while the refurbishment takes place. This disruption has been managed well to ensure that students can feel safe and secure in their temporary surroundings. There have been some difficulties, as established routines for students have been disrupted. However, given the size of the project, it is a successful temporary solution.

Leaders and managers have ensured that this project involved consultation with students. Requests from students included a common room with the facilities to make hot drinks, and continued access to the college garden. Further consultation on the refurbishment of the college building has identified that students would like a specialist science classroom to perform experiments and a café-style common room. It is anticipated that everyone can return to the college building in March 2018 with these new facilities.

Pastoral care is good, and is reinforced through positive relationships between students and residential staff. A student compared this college to previous educational places that he had experienced and said, 'This is the best place so far, they look after you more'. Within each house there are regular discussions about the running of the home and a very good approach to discussing equality and diversity, with a celebration of difference and toleration of others.

Staff provide a warm, caring environment with good use of humour. Students say that they like the staff who care for them, and particularly mention their personal tutors. A personal tutor spoke proudly of a visit to a prospective university with a student. He described how well the student had used the social skills that he has developed at this college to successfully attend such an interview.

Education, health and care plans reflect the individual needs of each student and identify areas for learning and development. Students are supported to achieve in these areas by residential and academic staff. Personal tutors support students throughout the day and evening, attending classes and work-based placements. This continuity helps students to maintain a routine through consistency of care.

Students benefit from the established relationships that the college holds with mainstream colleges, external agencies and local employers. Additional support is available through therapists, an assistant psychologist and counsellors. Effective working together as a multidisciplinary team supports students to progress in their health, education and psychological well-being. An older student reflected on the positive time

that he has had at this college and told the inspector, 'You wouldn't recognise me three years ago, I wouldn't have been able to talk to you'.

Residential accommodation is of a good standard, with a rolling programme of refurbishment. The range of properties and locations enable some choice for students and the option of moving if there are any friendship difficulties. Students can progress to live in a flat with reduced staff support in preparation for moving to university or living in the community upon leaving college.

Students develop life skills and independence. Learning to shop, budget and cook their meals is embraced well by most students. Road safety and travelling independently on public transport enables students to get themselves to this college, mainstream colleges and work placements. Some students take the opportunity to learn to drive. Students are supported to enjoy a social life with their friends and to pursue their interests. At the time of the inspection, students were out enjoying swimming, self-defence classes, cinema, army cadets and a trip to the local pub to play pool.

Students are supported to join the college at a pace that suits them, with time for visits and introductions. Parents report that generally communication is good, and if there are issues they are able to raise them. On occasions, when students are sent home due to disruptive behaviour or poor mental health, there is some parental dissatisfaction due to the lack of a timely plan for the students to return. Leaders and managers recognise this as an area for improvement.

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

Students receive good support to help them to feel safe when living away from home. Identified risks are documented well. This informs the strategies for the staff to use to manage student behaviour when they are unsettled. Specific support plans are created, in consultation with students, to promote their safety and personal awareness of matters such as self-harm and sexual exploitation.

The safety and welfare of students are promoted well by leaders, managers and staff. The designated person for safeguarding is suitably trained and ensures that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. There are effective links with the local authority safeguarding team and the police, and this ensures that leaders and managers share information in a multi-agency forum and do not manage safeguarding concerns in isolation.

With the changes in the senior leadership team there is a strong focus on reflection and reviewing any incidents involving the behaviour or safeguarding of students. Regular meetings are held for 'lessons learned', where a review of practice identifies what went well and any areas for improvement. These meetings record the action points assigned to specific staff members to take responsibility for implementing changes. A serious incident led to a review of systems and practice. Recommendations from the review have been implemented. They include training for staff to increase their understanding of self-harming behaviour and arrangements to commission a clinical psychologist.

Residential staff undertake regular observations with the full knowledge of the students, who know that staff are supporting them to keep safe. The level of staff supervision is reduced as students make progress, enabling them to go out with friends and take part in the community, developing their independence.

Students are provided with education on how to keep themselves, and others, safe. The use of computers and social media is regularly discussed and students undertake online e-safety training, which includes raising their awareness of the risk of radicalisation. The strength of the relationships between personal tutors and students enables these discussions to be delivered at an appropriate time when support is available to reduce any anxiety raised. Discussions are held on the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse. Staff encourage students to make healthy, safe choices. One student said, 'They try to encourage me to stop smoking here, not like my other school.'

There are times when students go missing from the residential accommodation. Staff actively search for and try to make contact with the student, using connections with family and friends. Records of these events confirm that students remain in the locality and are located after a short while, and they receive a warm welcome by the staff once they return. On the rare occasion that the police have been involved when students are missing, they visit to check that the student is safe and well upon return. The college failed to follow statutory guidance to liaise with the responsible local authority to arrange an independent return home interview after one incident of a student going missing.

Students are fully aware of the expected behaviour through the rules and boundaries imposed by leaders, managers and staff. At times, student behaviour breaches the boundaries and sanctions are imposed, such as an increase in staff supervision or a restriction on visitors to the residential accommodation. There are very few sanctions given, as most incidents are addressed through discussion with a personal tutor and senior managers, identifying what support can be provided to prevent a repeat of the negative behaviour.

New staff are employed subject to robust safer recruitment procedures. A recruitment drive has resulted in several new appointments of care staff. Health and safety matters are routinely checked to provide a safe environment. Students experience evacuating the houses when hearing the fire alarm to ensure that they are prepared for the event of a fire.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

Leaders and managers are committed to improvement and exploring where lessons can be learned. Staff have mixed views on the manner in which leaders and managers have brought about changes. The majority of staff welcome the changes and feel informed, supported and effectively led. However, a significant number of staff report a lack of information from leaders and managers and frustration at perceived staff shortages, consequently do not feel valued.

Staff members' professional development is supported well by a comprehensive training

programme. However, individual support through supervision is lacking and requires improvement. Leaders and managers are in the process of undertaking an audit of staff supervision, therefore are aware of this shortfall and have plans to rectify it.

The college is part of a group of five children's care and educational services that are operated by the same provider. This new structure, led by an operations director, is providing opportunities for shared resources. One improvement has been regular meetings with the care leaders and those with safeguarding responsibilities. As this structure becomes more established, the potential benefits include strengthening the focus on raising standards and striving for good, and better, outcomes. The development plan reflects this vision, with scheduled reviews and reports on governance of this college. The investment in the refurbishment of the college building demonstrates a big commitment to the improvement plan.

Leaders and managers do not routinely monitor the records relating to student behaviour, such as incident reports, sanctions and going missing. The log books are incomplete and fail to adequately cross-reference to associated records. The way that incidents are managed is appropriate, yet the records do not always support the practice. This shortfall has minimal impact directly on the students, but it hinders the monitoring of records and fails to provide clear and accurate information for any effective analysis.

There have not been any complaints by students for over a year. Complaints by others have not been managed within the timescale stated in the procedure, and one complaint had not been concluded at the time of this inspection.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of young people. They watched how professional staff work with young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the college knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** SC041633

**Head of College:** Caroline Scott

### **Inspectors**

Clare Davies, social care inspector

Wendy Anderson, social care inspector

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