

Farleigh Further Education College – Frome

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

27–29 November 2018

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Provision for students with high needs Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	
Outcomes for students	Good	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Students receive excellent, sensitive support from managers, tutors and support staff in classes, on work experience and in their places of residence. All students follow individualised timetables that support their progress very well.
- Students make good or better progress in developing new skills and knowledge, and improving their behaviours for work, for further study and for living independently in the community.
- Leaders and managers have developed strong partnerships with two local further education colleges. As a result, many students study on level 2 and 3 vocational and academic courses at the colleges.
- Leaders and managers have fostered a strong culture of safeguarding at the college. All staff know their students extremely well and they quickly identify and provide excellent support to students when they are having a difficult time or making important decisions.
- Students attend high-quality work placements that relate closely to their medium-term ambitions and goals. For example, students studying history help guide visitors at the Stonehenge site.
- Leaders and managers have invested significantly in the refurbishment of the college building, which has created professional, positive and calm classrooms, workshops and student breakout rooms.
- Leaders and managers do not gather the views of other people involved in the college – such as students, parents and carers, employers and community partners – to help them plan and make decisions.
- Tutors do not always set students challenging enough learning targets. Too many students do not know their targets and do not always have a chance to discuss them with their tutors. Some students do not receive purposeful written feedback on their course work.
- Leaders and managers have started to collect useful information about achievements and the quality of provision, although they are not yet using this fully to inform future plans.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Farleigh Further Education (FE) College is an independent specialist college for young people with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or Asperger syndrome. Students often have other complex needs and find learning in traditional settings, without specialist support, extremely challenging. The college provides students with residential and day placements. Students follow individualised learning and support programmes which are based on their individual needs, interests and previous educational experiences.
- The curriculum offers students the opportunity to learn flexibly, often combining a course at one of two local further education colleges with a course in the newly refurbished specialist college and making use of a range of off-site learning opportunities and personalised work-based learning placements. The residential accommodation is modern and enables students to live in homes in the heart of the community.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Tutors should work with students to set targets that are meaningful and relate specifically to the targeted outcomes in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Tutors should frequently measure and record the progress that students have made from their starting points, as well as their achievement of interim 'milestones' and of their full individualised targets.
- Tutors should provide all students with detailed and constructive written feedback on their coursework so that students know their strengths and weaknesses and how to improve their work continually.
- Leaders and managers should invite external and internal stakeholders to provide them with regular constructive feedback on the quality of provision, using a wide range of methods, so that they can benefit from the feedback and use it to celebrate success and to inform their decision-making.
- Leaders and managers should use information and data more effectively to enable them to have a more accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They should use this knowledge to take appropriate remedial action and to inform future decision-making.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and managers are passionate about providing high-quality education and support for their students. They have a clear and ambitious vision for their students and for the future of the college. The recent changes to the management structure have resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, as well as to many systems and procedures at the college, such as those relating to safeguarding.
- Senior leaders continually revise the curriculum to ensure that it meets the changing and increasingly complex needs of the students. At the request of many local authorities, the college is now developing a 52-week residential provision for students. Managers have also adapted the level 1 curriculum to support students in starting their preparations for future employment earlier in their courses.
- Managers ensure that the communication between support, teaching and residential staff is highly effective. Staff meet each day to share information about students' behaviour, support needs and their learning and personal targets. As a result, staff know the young people extremely well and work closely together to provide them with excellent support and guidance.
- Health and safety practices are very well structured and highly effective. Managers and staff are well informed and have a wide range of specialist knowledge, for example in relation to fire safety and first aid. Internal and external experts regularly review these procedures to ensure that students remain safe at the college and in the residences.
- Leaders and managers involve all staff in the self-assessment of the provision. As a result, the self-assessment document is concise and mostly accurate in its evaluation. Managers review and update it regularly with evidence of progress made. However, too few external stakeholders participate in the process and, therefore, some aspects of good practice or areas of weakness are not always sufficiently detailed.
- Managers use the appraisal system effectively to discuss staff's performance and to inform and support continual improvements in teaching, learning and support for students. Managers provide staff with clear guidance on the standard of work they expect. They encourage staff to implement personal action plans and support them to improve their performance before formal action is taken.
- Leaders and managers have developed a well-planned quality assurance cycle, which includes data collection and analysis, themed learning walks that focus, for example, on tutors' use of questions, the quality of the learning environment, the assessment of students' work and the planning of lessons. However, managers do not focus explicitly through these activities on the progress made by students in developing their knowledge and skills over time.
- Leaders and managers provide staff with a wide range of relevant and informative training which prioritises teaching, learning and assessment and student safety. The activities include workshops on topics such as first aid, target-setting, the use of EHC plans, study skills, safeguarding, self-harm, suicide awareness, autism spectrum disorder and revision techniques.
- Leaders and managers use high needs funding appropriately. As a result, students receive

fully the entitlements and support arrangements that are identified in their EHC plans.

- Senior leaders have developed well-established partnerships with two local general further education colleges. As a result, many Farleigh FE College students attend these colleges to study on academic and vocational courses at levels 2 and 3 in subjects such as accountancy, science and animal care. Staff communicate frequently with partner college managers. They carefully share detailed information about students' support needs before they start a course at the partner college. Staff are highly responsive and support partner staff well when they wish to discuss any issues regarding Farleigh College students.
- Specialist support staff provide tutors at Farleigh FE College and at the two partner colleges with advice and helpful strategies to enable them to support Farleigh students in developing their knowledge, learning behaviours and skills. As a result, almost all of the students studying on academic and vocational courses at the further education colleges make good or better progress towards achieving their qualifications and improving their standard of work.
- Leaders and managers have recently started to analyse the data for safeguarding incidents, student progress, qualification achievements and any differences in achievement between students from particular groups and their peers. However, leaders and managers are not yet using this information to bring about additional improvements at the college, as systems have only just been introduced this term. Leaders have clear plans to analyse the data at the end of this term.

The governance of the provider

- The recently appointed operations director has strengthened the governance arrangements at the college. Leaders have appointed a new team of college governors which includes senior managers from within the Priory Group. They have experience in national roles in human resources, safeguarding, health and safety, care, and quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The new governors provide college managers with effective specialist support and guidance, which has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, in safeguarding practices and in the living and learning opportunities for students. However, governors have not yet met as a group to measure the overall impact of their actions on the quality of the provision or to identify the appropriate remedial actions to be taken.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The culture of safeguarding, respect and tolerance is embedded very well in education and residential housing. Safeguarding staff have a comprehensive understanding of the safety issues in the local community. As a result, they have developed effective strategies to inform students of the dangers and issues within the area and to support them to stay safe. The designated safeguarding leads quickly identify students who might be at risk of child sexual exploitation, online vulnerabilities and self-harm. They support these students extremely well to stay safe. Students know the safeguarding staff and they know when and how to refer any concerns about their safety. However, safeguarding managers recognise that more work is needed to ensure that students have a more in-depth

understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and exploitation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Specialist support staff and the transition coordinator assess students' starting points accurately before they join the college. They use this information to provide students with well-planned effective transition activities. For example, day and residential students attend several fun and informative summer events at the college, which prepare them well for their new courses and for life in the residences and the local community.
- Staff use recently improved teaching and learning resources effectively to make lessons interesting and their learning spaces more engaging. Students appreciate the calm learning environments and stimulating equipment. For example, they enjoy manipulating therapy beans in water bowls, an activity which helps them reduce anxiety.
- Staff in education and residences – including specialist support staff – provide students with very good-quality support in developing their educational knowledge and personal skills. As a result, most students are making good or better progress in their studies and demonstrate improvements in their confidence, teamworking and speaking skills.
- Staff regularly share detailed information regarding learners' progress towards achieving their targets during the daily morning and afternoon handover meetings, and during the half-termly student reviews. As a result, staff monitor students' moods effectively and check they are continuing to make good progress in their learning throughout the day.
- Tutors plan lessons well to meet individual needs. They create relaxed and relevant learning environments which help students to concentrate and develop further their skills and knowledge. For example, students studying GCSE art are able to research logos for designing the packaging for a computer game. They learned how to take and save screenshots of their work.
- Tutors sensitively challenge students in lessons. They encourage them to build on their previous skills and knowledge and to develop further their independence and behaviour. Many students spoken to by inspectors could clearly identify the new knowledge and skills that they have developed since joining their course. Most students produce work at or above the expected standard.
- Tutors work closely with students to create timetables of study and learning and support activities that meet their individual needs and interests very well. For example, students attending academic courses at a local further education college also enjoy the additional learning activities at Farleigh FE College, thus increasing their independence.
- Support therapists work well with tutors at Farleigh FE College and the two further education colleges to plan effective learning for students. They provide tutors with advice and strategies to enable them to support students effectively and to ensure that they make good progress in developing their knowledge and skills.
- Students benefit from comprehensive individualised support services from specialist support staff who carry out an in-depth assessment of their needs at the beginning of their programme. Staff provide students with speech and language improvement workshops. They have recently developed new learning modules for students in topics such as coping strategies, interpersonal relationships and healthy adult living, which are helping students to stay on their courses and to develop positive relationships with their

peers and tutors. Students are already benefiting from new strategies, such as learning how to self-soothe when distressed, but it is too soon to measure the impact of these new learning programmes on students' outcomes.

- Staff are knowledgeable and well trained. They have a very good understanding of the needs of a small number of young people who are undergoing transgender transformation. Staff are empathetic and are considerate to the diverse needs of their students. They provide timely and personalised support to their students. As a result, students develop well emotionally during their time at the college. They settle into learning quickly, become more confident about what they want to do in the future and have a better understanding of who they are.
- Many students make good progress in improving their literacy skills on academic and vocational courses. For example, tutors promote students' writing skills well in lessons and, as a result, the presentation of students' work and the quality of their handwriting in subjects such as GCSE art improve significantly over time.
- Students studying GCSE English, English A level and English functional skills receive explicit written feedback from their teacher, such as how to use the correct tense, which helps them improve the standard of their writing and analysis skills over time. However, too many tutors in other subjects do not routinely provide students with detailed and critical feedback on how to improve their written work.
- A minority of tutors do not plan lessons well enough to ensure that students work together with their peers during lessons and thus develop their speaking and listening skills. As a result, a few students spend too much time working independently, even though many have learning and personal targets which identify teamwork and verbal communication skills as an area for improvement.
- Many tutors develop students' mathematical skills well in academic and vocational lessons, for example in GCSE geography and sport and in AS biology. In GCSE art, students use a range of measurements to create symmetrical, asymmetrical and radial balance in their designs and artwork. However, a few academic and vocational tutors do not plan lessons well enough to make the most of opportunities to promote and develop students' mathematical skills.
- Too few staff set students clear learning targets in lessons or for their work placements. Students are not sufficiently involved in assessing and recording their achievements. Many students do not know what targets they are working towards, what they have achieved to date or what they need to do to improve. Learning support workers are not always aware of the specific learning goals for students at work placements or in lessons.
- In a few cases, tutors and therapists do not communicate sufficiently with parents about the planned learning or the progress made by students. These parents are not aware of what students are learning and, hence, are unable to reinforce the learning at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students enjoy attending lessons and being at the college and the residences. They participate in a wide range of social activities which provide them with good opportunities to socialise. They improve their interpersonal and social skills well.
- Students benefit from a good range of enrichment activities that are specifically designed

for young people with autism spectrum disorder. These activities promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They improve their interactions with others, and develop effective listening and questioning skills, trust, confidence and self-esteem. Students also learn about self-advocacy, personal boundaries, managing examination stress and changing attitudes to autism spectrum disorder and mental health.

- Students gain useful skills from their additional activities. When working in the kitchens, students learn about health and safety at work, the procedures for first aid and recycling, and understand how to sort metal, paper and glass. Students enjoy visits to the woods, where they learn bushcraft skills. A few students engage in meditation and enjoy going for walks.
- Students gain control over their anxieties and develop good coping strategies. They enjoy being in the dedicated quiet spaces. The new learning hub offers students opportunities to manage their feelings and lead more independent lives.
- Most students benefit from helpful careers advice and guidance from the newly appointed advice and guidance coordinator and their personal tutors. Students participate in workshops that help them to prepare for work, volunteering and further study, such as interview techniques, workplace behaviours and developing an appropriate online presence.
- Staff have identified correctly that students would benefit from more opportunities to meet and learn from more employers and staff from colleges, community groups and housing associations in their final year of study. Such meetings would aid their successful progression from college to their next step, including supported living. Plans are in place to increase these learning opportunities in the summer term.
- All students report feeling safe. They know who to contact if they do not feel safe. They have a very good awareness of how to stay safe online. Staff provide students with screensavers on computers which include staff telephone numbers and email contacts. Students are aware of the risk of sharing information online. For example, a few students refused to participate in the Ofsted pre-inspection questionnaire as they were unsure of the safety of the online platform. Students have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.
- Tutors, students and other staff foster respectful adult-to-adult relationships. Most students improve the management of their feelings and become more resilient during their time at college. Students learn good coping strategies, including the use of a weighted blanket to reduce their stress and anxiety levels.
- Students benefit from a wide range of high-quality work placements which match their interests and hobbies well. The community-based placements – such as those in leisure and well-being centres, charity shops, garden centres, travel agencies, offices and National Trust properties – help to prepare students for their next step after college. All students on 16 to 19 study programmes attend external work placements. For example, students who are interested in history are placed in a military museum. Others who are interested in plants and horticulture work at a garden centre.
- Students develop excellent customer care skills. They become more knowledgeable about life in the community and more confident about their role in society. Students can become a customer service champion – someone who confidently asks customers at the garden

centre if they want help, and then carries their purchases to their cars. A few students work in the cafe at the college and have learned how to make soup and serve customers. At lunchtime, staff support students to choose their food and make good eye contact when politely purchasing food and drink.

- Students make good progress in developing their practical skills. They take pride in their work and many produce work of a high standard. Students working in the workshop in Trowbridge make wooden reindeer, candleholders and Christmas tree 'bug hotels'. The items are often sold in a local garden centre. They learn how to use a bandsaw safely, fit and glue wood, use nails and paint accurately.
- Staff ensure that students have regular opportunities to express their views about the college. Students take part in the Farleigh FE College's student council meetings, which are well run, with clear agendas and detailed minutes of each meeting. Students have led on the planning of an end-of-term 'prom', for which they have chosen the music and the party activities.
- A few students have a limited understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and exploitation. Staff have developed a well-informed and comprehensive learning programme to develop students' understanding of fundamental British values and the 'Prevent' duty. This includes topics such as the rule of law, religion, British identity, immigration and individual liberty. However, students will not take part in this learning until the spring term.

Outcomes for students

Good

- Students develop very good independent living skills, which include cooking, budgeting, doing their laundry, coping with independent travel and keeping themselves safe. Students receive a budget from staff and they plan, shop and cook their own meals at the residential accommodation.
- Students' work is at least at the expected level. Many produce work above the expected level of their qualification. In GCSE science, students produce extremely neat written work. They write up complex experiments in an agreed format very accurately.
- All students attend appropriate work placements that will support them in their chosen careers. Those students who want to progress onto university are given specific and helpful support about UCAS applications, student finance and additional learning support equipment, and are supported in their visits to chosen universities.
- Students studying at Farleigh FE College and at the two local further education colleges achieve well. Almost all students make good or better progress from their starting points. A large majority of students who undertook GCSEs and A levels in the previous year passed their qualifications. Almost half of these passes were achieved with high grades. Five of the students who completed their course last year progressed onto university.
- In the previous year, almost all students progressed onto further study, apprenticeships, internships or work, and two students went travelling independently around the world. Students have clear transition plans for their accommodation needs. Of those who left at the end of 2017/18, all are now living in their first-choice accommodation, including halls of residence and supported living. Staff appropriately supported those students who wanted to return home.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131878
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of students	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	84
Principal/CEO	Caroline Scott
Telephone number	01373 045 6470
Website	www.priorychildrenservices.co.uk/find-a-location/farleigh-further-education-college-frome/

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of students (excluding apprenticeships)	8	4	25	15	15	16	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of students aged 14 to 16	NA							
Number of students for which the provider receives high-needs funding	83							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Strode Further Education College Wiltshire Further Education College							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of college, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students, parents and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Tracey Zimmerman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denise Olander	Her Majesty's Inspector
Penny Mathers	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Brennan	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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