

# Farleigh College

Independent school standard inspection report

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DfE registration number	933/6195
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131016
URN for social care	033016
Inspection number	361369
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Thomas Fisher-Smith
Social care inspector	Martin Davies HMI

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>3</sup>

## Information about the school

Farleigh College is a residential school for up to 65 students aged 11 to 19 years, of mixed gender, and who have Asperger's syndrome and associated difficulties. The majority are of White British origin. The college, which opened in 1996, provides termly, weekly boarding and day placements for students. It is located in a former Georgian manor house and grounds, approximately five miles from Frome in Somerset. The provision is on five sites; three of these are residences and one is a satellite learning base. All are within 30 minutes travel of the main college site at Mells, which also includes residential provision. The college is owned by The Priory Education and Children's Services which owns other similar schools that provide education for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Currently there are 49 students on roll, of these 34 are resident and all have statements of special educational needs. The aims of the college are to teach students about their diagnosis and provide them with strategies to live full and productive lives. Concurrent with this education inspection, the residential provision was also inspected by Ofsted Children's Directorate. The college had its last education inspection in November 2007 and a care inspection in March 2010. Since the last education inspection the composition of the senior management team has changed.

## Evaluation of the school

Farleigh College provides good quality education and meets its broad aims. This quality has improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is good and students are provided with a good curriculum that enables them to develop their range of diverse talents. Students make good progress from their starting points, and many attain GCSEs and other accreditation. Supported by satisfactory procedures for their welfare, health and safety, students' personal development is

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga\\_20000014\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1)

satisfactory and they generally behave well. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The college meets all but one of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The overall quality of the curriculum is good. The breadth of the curriculum ensures that the needs and interests of the students are well provided for; post-16 students also benefit from a curriculum that is tailored to their particular needs. The curriculum provides opportunities for access to additional support such as speech and language therapy, literacy support and occupational therapy.

In its implementation, the curriculum is appropriately modified to take account of students' individual needs and there is a suitable emphasis on the acquisition of skills in literacy and numeracy. The college provides specific literacy support for individual students and this benefits their studies in other subjects. Adequate provision is made for personal, social and health education, though the school accepts that this is an area in need of further development. Students study a suitable range of subjects that includes careers education and citizenship. Alongside this, students also follow practical subjects, such as design and technology. In Year 11 most students gain GCSEs in key subjects such as English, mathematics and science, but GCSEs are also taken up in subjects as diverse as statistics and classical civilisation. Some students gain GCSE accreditation in Year 10.

Curriculum planning is held on the college's internal server network. It is mostly used well and provides a sound guide for teaching and students' progression in learning. However, in a few subjects, planning is insufficiently detailed. There is too much dependency on the expertise and individual knowledge of teachers to provide work and content at a suitable level of detail and challenge to ensure learning and progress. Consequently, if teachers are absent or unavailable, students' progress is compromised.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and this mirrors the progress that most students make. Where lessons are taught by teachers with specialist subject knowledge, they offer good levels of challenge to students. The tasks they provide are enjoyable and encourage students to take a full, active part in their learning. This was seen, for example, in English lessons for both older and younger students. The older students were asked to empathise with characters in the novel *Of Mice and Men*; this they did with great success through role playing their chosen character. The younger students successfully completed an exercise in describing emotions which they related from their own setting. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to support teaching and learning in some, but not all, lessons. Less effective lessons tend to be those where the style of teaching is more question and answer, or where the learning is derived solely from a text book. A common theme in a few lessons was that there were too few opportunities for students to demonstrate skills in speaking and listening. In some instances, students were not allowed a response time that was sufficient to enable them to formulate an answer. The good relationships between staff and students are a significant factor in the success of teaching and learning. Students' responses and behaviour are managed well and staff have a good understanding and knowledge of each student and their

individual conditions. Consequently, students generally concentrate well throughout most lessons and this contributes to the good progress that they make.

Good individual education plans underpin teaching and learning. These are well devised documents, and where they are used consistently, provide a good resource to support students' learning and personal development. The targets they contain are realistic, accurately derived from students' statements of special educational needs and clearly identify what the student needs to do in order to improve.

The college uses a rigorous and effective assessment system that provides good evidence of students' progress. All subjects provide information about each student's attainment and the aggregated results provide a secure picture of their progress over time. Assessment practice within most lessons is good, but in a minority this is less secure and not used as frequently. These lessons end without a clear knowledge by the teacher of what the students have learned and understood. In these few lessons, students are denied the opportunity to confirm and enjoy the success of their effort.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The students' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. It is underpinned by the good relationships that exist between staff and students and the good links between education and residential staff. Students make an effective contribution to their community through activities such as the school council. The consistency of behaviour management between the residential and education staff along with their good communication practice enhances the quality of provision. Students become increasingly self-aware. This is most evident in older students who show an increasing capability to manage change and respond more readily to their surroundings. The ethos of the college encourages the development of students' self-esteem. Frequent contact with the local community and charity fund-raising initiatives enable students to view themselves as making a worthwhile contribution to the wider society. Many parents also confirmed this view in their questionnaire responses. For example, one parent wrote that, 'Now, our son has a future.' Feelings of self-worth are also evident in students' attendance at lessons; they attend willingly and settle to work equally quickly. Where absences occur, these are generally attributable to students' individual conditions.

Generally, students' behaviour is good; although some, as one parent described, 'have their moments', the majority respond well to the calm and consistent approaches of all staff. Students' own views about the behaviour in the college are understandably mixed – though the majority say that it is good. Students do understand the concept of right and wrong and they are very open to correction by staff. Responses, such as that within an English lesson for older students which concerned racism, indicate they have a clear moral outlook.

The curriculum makes specific provision for students' understanding of citizenship. Through this subject, they gain a secure understanding of the wider community and the services that are available. The whole community celebrates cultural and multicultural events but these tend to be isolated or themed occasions that are not readily integrated or embedded within the college's wider curriculum. The outcome of this is that students may become aware of different cultures without necessarily

gaining an understanding of them. The curriculum prepares students well for their later lives by equipping them with the skills they will need. Significantly, the college fulfils its central aim by enabling most students to accept and manage change. The residential element of the college provides a good platform for the personal development of students. The practices are complementary to those of the education provision. For example, students are fully involved in the consultation process where issues directly affect them and the college actively seeks their views.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is satisfactory. The college has an appropriate safeguarding policy which is implemented satisfactorily. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out, particularly where off-site facilities are used, and the effectiveness of these is monitored through behaviour management and placement plans. Fire prevention measures are satisfactory and complemented by regular testing of equipment and building services. Staff are vigilant in their supervision of students; most students are escorted between locations on the college site. Anti-bullying measures are in place and these are reinforced by events such as a week that had anti-bullying as its theme. Students indicate in their questionnaire returns that there is no systematic bullying of which they are aware. And if they need to, there is always someone to whom they can turn for help. The tutor system within the college and other support mechanisms within the residences ensure that students are cared for appropriately.

The college provides opportunities for students to take part in regular exercise. This is either within the curriculum or in students' free time. The residential provision enables students to take part in activities such as ice-skating and hill-walking. The curriculum for personal, social and health education includes provision for teaching students about the risks associated with drug misuse. However, not all students have access to this particular provision. Students indicated through their questionnaires that they are aware of hazards that might face them, and older students firmly indicate they feel ready to move on to their next phase of life or education. The college has compiled an appropriate response by which it can meet its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, (as amended).

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All the required safeguarding checks are carried out on the proprietor and education staff and these are recorded appropriately in the central register of staff checks

## **Premises of and accommodation at the school**

The premises and accommodation enable students to learn effectively and safely. Purpose-built classrooms each include a computer station for every student and specialist facilities such as those for science and art support the curriculum and learning effectively. A further provision for design and technology is located nearby and all classrooms are also equipped with interactive whiteboards.

## **Provision of information**

With the exception of one mandatory requirement the school provides a good range of information for parents. The exception is that parents are not routinely provided with a copy of the college's safeguarding policy. The quality of reports provided to parents is very good: these are informative and provide parents with a good picture of how their child is performing. Parents expressed positive comments about the very good communication they have with the school.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The college's policy and procedures for the management of complaints fully meet the requirements.

## **Effectiveness of the boarding provision**

The overall quality of boarding provision is satisfactory. Strong leadership and improved lines of accountability are now in place. The head of care is supported by three assistants who, together, are improving the quality of care in key areas; of the 10 recommendations made at the last boarding inspection in March 2010, eight are now fully met. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

Young people's routine health needs are suitably met. Safe medication storage practices are followed with clear arrangements in place for the receipt and administration of drugs. The school has recently reviewed and improved students' health care plans; however, further work is required to ensure that these accurately cover all identified health needs. Specialist health services are now coordinated by the head of therapy and work is underway to ensure that individual young people have access to, and benefit from, specialist services.

The school takes care to provide young people with a balanced and varied diet. The food served is nutritious and a choice is always available. Mealtimes in houses are relaxed and enjoyable, and staff work hard to ensure that young people are actively involved in menu planning and preparation of meals. Young people have raised concerns regarding the quality and choice of food served at lunchtime; this issue has been discussed by the school council and a range of solutions are under consideration.

Clear and well understood systems are in place to protect young people. Anti-bullying strategies are effective; young people report that serious bullying is rare and wherever there are concerns that staff act promptly and consistently to manage incidents. Complaints received are thoroughly investigated and monitored effectively, and young people report that staff take their concerns seriously.

There are robust systems in place to ensure that all staff receive appropriate child protection training and good links have been established with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and other statutory agencies. However, further work is required to

ensure that apparent low-level concerns are managed effectively, and where necessary, that advice is sought from children's services regarding welfare issues.

Staff enable young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement and consistent application of the school's rules and expectations. The head of care is informed of any incident where physical intervention has been used, and reviews both individual and strategic planning where necessary. While clear records of sanctions are maintained and young people are encouraged to record their views in these records, the strategic monitoring of sanctions across houses is not fully effective.

The staff recruitment policy is appropriate; however, despite clear expectations that all new staff will be closely supervised, shortfalls in recruitment practice have the potential to put young people at risk.

Robust systems ensure that good communication is maintained between boarding and education staff, enabling care staff to appropriately support young people's educational progress. Young people report positive relationships with staff and feel well supported; the appointment of an independent visitor strengthens the support available to individual young people.

Young people are encouraged to contribute to decision making regarding developments in boarding provision. The school council is well embedded and is having a tangible impact on service provision. Consultation within houses is a particular strength and contributes to the high value that young people attach to their house group.

Importance is given to care planning, with behaviour support plans being particularly effective. However, the individual care plans currently in place do not give sufficient regard to individual background factors, including potential risk factors.

Accommodation within the main school site is well maintained and provides sufficient facilities to meet the individual and collective needs of the young people. The off-site houses provide excellent standards of accommodation, including opportunities for older young people to live more independently. Health and safety systems are fully effective across all of the boarding accommodation.

Young people benefit from a stable and consistent staff group who understand their needs well. The senior management team is visible and provides effective leadership and direction to care staff. Considerable developments have taken place since that last inspection; however, a number of key systems are yet to be fully embedded and as a result, appropriate levels of formal supervision and staff appraisal have yet to be achieved.

Staff benefit from a thorough induction process and have access to a range of basic training and development events. Plans are in place to more closely involve the head of therapy in the design and delivery of staff training programmes. Currently only 50% of care staff have the relevant National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 qualification. While a number of staff are working towards this qualification, progress in this regard has not been sufficient.

External monitoring on behalf of the responsible body is effective and contributes towards the school's action plan. Internal monitoring systems are in place and in most regards are effective, but there remain gaps in the monitoring of some key areas.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of that listed below.<sup>4</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that a copy of the college's safeguarding policy is published on its website or sent to parents of students (and of prospective students on request) (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

In order to meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated regulations, the school should:

- make certain that systems in place in the school ensure that any suspicion of abuse or neglect is properly responded to (NMS 5)
- ensure that records of sanctions are regularly reviewed by a senior member of the school's staff to identify any patterns in incidents leading to sanctions (NMS 10)
- ensure that written health care plans include all relevant information (NMS 14)
- ensure written placement plans include how cultural and racial needs are to be met, and set out any significant risk factors (NMS 17)
- make certain that the system for recruiting staff ensures that all required checks are in place (NMS 27)
- ensure that staff receive formal supervision and appraisal at the required frequency (NMS 30)
- ensure that a minimum ratio of 80% of staff have completed their level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People NVQ or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies as the NVQ (NMS 31)

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<sup>4</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made)

- ensure that an effective internal system is designed to monitor records, and identify patterns and issues requiring attention (NMS 32).

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- make wider provision for the personal, social and health education of students
- provide dedicated training for teachers and other staff that will enable them to use interactive whiteboards more effectively.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			✓	
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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### The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision			✓	
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Residential special school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1996		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 41	Girls: 8	Total: 49
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 26	Girls: 8	Total: 34
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 41	Girls: 8	Total: 49
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£68,000		
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£95,000		
<b>Address of school</b>	Farleigh College, Newbury Manor, Newbury, Nr Mells, Frome, Somerset, BA11 3RG		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01373 814980		
<b>Email address</b>	alunmaddocks@priorygroup.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alun Maddocks		
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Priory Education and Children's Services		