

Farleigh FE College Swindon

Focused monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Margaret Swift HMI

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Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: 43 Bath Road
Old Town
Swindon
SN1 4AS

Telephone number: 01793 719500

Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Farleigh Further Education College (Farleigh College) in Swindon was established in September 2004 as part of the Priory Education Services, which provides specialist provision across the country for young people with autistic spectrum conditions. Farleigh College provides individual programmes for learners, mostly delivered within three local further education college partnerships. As well as their main academic programme, all learners have individual elements to develop social and independence skills.

Learners attend Farleigh College either on a day or residential basis. The residential provision is offered in four different establishments which are situated within Swindon's Old Town. At the time of the monitoring visit there were 62 learners on programmes.

Farleigh College was last inspected in January 2010 and all aspects were graded good. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Farleigh College made in monitoring and reviewing all learners' activities to help inform the quality improvement arrangements and the self-assessment process? **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, the college lacked a comprehensive system for recording learners' progress and achievements across all areas of their college programme. The college now has an electronic system in place for the monitoring and reviewing of all learners' activities. The system is new this year so it is too early to judge the impact of its effectiveness; the new report format should provide the college with a detailed profile of each learner's achievements across all their activities. All future self-assessment reports will include data on all aspects of a learner's programme but there is still much work to do. At the time of the monitoring visit, data were incomplete. Not all the GCSE results were known as there is no system in place to ensure partner colleges report the results to Farleigh College. Currently, data can only be entered by the data manager, so key workers manually complete an overview form each term for each of their learners. The data manager then puts the data onto the system. There is no analysis of underachievement, so staff do not know if learners are consistently failing to achieve particular targets, nor do they know how many learners the underachievement affects.

Outcomes for learners

How well have learners achieved since the last inspection and what progress has Farleigh College made in encouraging learners to move on to further education and training and into independent and supported living since the last inspection? **Reasonable progress**

The achievement of independent living skills targets in 2010/11 was satisfactory at 72%. However, the achievement of primary learning goals has declined over the last three years from 91% in 2008/09 to 77% in 2010/11. Partial achievement of targets accounted for 20% and only 8% were not achieved. Farleigh College started teaching AS- and A-level courses in 2010/11. One learner, who had no formal qualifications on arrival at the college, achieved well in two AS modules. Learners' achievement of functional skills was good at 83%. The achievement of Open College Network (OCN) credits is satisfactory.

Farleigh College knows its learners well and holds detailed destination data on all of them. Twenty-two learners left the college in July 2011. There was good progression into further training and into employment. Three learners went on to higher education and six went on to courses in further education colleges in their home area. Three are in voluntary employment, one in supported employment and two went on to work-based training. Six are still working with adult services in their local area while they actively seek employment.

Although some learners find supported independent accommodation on leaving Farleigh College, too many of them are returning to their family home. In 2010, 59% of learners returned to the family home but this did reduce to 54% in 2011.

Quality of provision

What progress has Farleigh College made in developing learners' employability skills through realistic work settings? **Insufficient progress**

Since the last inspection, Farleigh College has provided good training to help employers understand the benefits of employing young people with an autistic spectrum condition. Staff from the college have trained employers from local firms and well-known national companies, as well as staff in further education colleges both locally and in learners' home areas. The training has helped employers to understand the benefits of employing someone who thinks differently, and has helped college staff to work more effectively with Farleigh College learners.

Farleigh College has introduced additional activities to prepare their learners for employment. A good example is the interview techniques training course the college introduced last year for all its final year learners. Interviews were filmed and given to each learner on a DVD, along with detailed feedback on how they could improve.

Although Farleigh College has increased the number and range of work placements available for learners, too many still do not have any work experience whilst at college. Last year, 7 of the 22 leavers did not take part in any work experience. The college acknowledges that it needs to put more systematic processes in place to ensure all learners gain work experience during their time at college.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in developing sufficiently detailed targets to recognise learners' progression effectively?

Reasonable progress

At the time of the last inspection, learners' individual learning plans did not contain sufficiently detailed targets to recognise their progress effectively. Staff have now had training to help them set precise and measurable targets. As part of the training, staff were given good examples of clearly focused and measurable targets to help them formulate targets for their learners. However, targets viewed during the monitoring visit still varied significantly. Some are now much more precise and will enable staff to monitor the progress of their learners. Others are still too vague and broad to be helpful to learners. The recording and monitoring form, which staff use with all learners, has been improved this year and should help staff to formulate more precise targets and record progress towards achievement appropriately. The college is also strengthening the monitoring of targets this year, with senior staff monitoring both the setting and evaluation of targets more frequently.

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