

Farleigh College

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mick Megee
Social care inspector	Thomas Webber

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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.^{1, 2}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by 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.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Farleigh College is a residential special school which is registered for up to 65 pupils aged 11 to 19 years, of mixed gender, and who have Asperger's syndrome and associated difficulties. The college, which opened in 1996, provides termly and weekly residential as well as day placements for pupils. 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 Priory Education Services, a national provider of specialist education and care. Currently there are 38 pupils on roll, of these 24 are resident and all have a statement of special educational needs. The aims of the college are to teach pupils about their diagnosis and provide them with strategies to live full and productive lives.

This current education inspection was integrated with an inspection of the residential provision. The college had its last education inspection in December 2010. A residential inspection in September 2011 found that the overall effectiveness of the college's residential provision was inadequate. Since the last residential inspection a new Principal was appointed in January 2012 and a new leadership team is now in place.

Evaluation of the school

The college provides a satisfactory quality of education that meets its aims and maintains the standards identified at the previous inspection. The overall effectiveness of the residential provision has improved since its last inspection and is now good. Pupils' educational progress is satisfactory, reflecting the satisfactory

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁴ www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

quality of the teaching and curriculum. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, as is their behaviour. Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good and the procedures for safeguarding meet requirements. The college meets almost all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The college implements a satisfactory, broad and relevant curriculum that includes access to the National Curriculum, whilst incorporating therapeutic and personal aspects. The curriculum helps pupils to deal with, and overcome, social and emotional barriers to learning through the provision of psychological support. The college's curriculum policies and schemes of work are designed so that pupils have a continuous experience of learning as they move through the college. Parents and carers say that the curriculum is good. The curriculum is broadly matched in teachers' planning to most pupils' needs, capabilities and interests, but teachers do not always adapt activities sufficiently well in lessons. Both day and residential pupils have interesting educational opportunities away from the college site such as golf, caving, climbing, horse riding and undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Pupils in Key Stage 4 and at post-16 have a number of vocational options, including attending college and work experience. Pupils have opportunities to develop their basic skills in literacy and numeracy throughout the day, although teachers do not provide this consistently in all lessons. Pupils are able to achieve relevant qualifications, for example through GCSE, in most subjects and through the Open College Network in Interior Building Skills, Pathways to Employment and horticulture. The college is developing curricular links with similar schools and local colleges.

The curriculum is underpinned by the college's personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme, which is incorporated successfully into all lessons. This programme includes guidance on careers. Residential staff work in the classroom so that they are able to support the learning of residential pupils at home. The extra-curricular and 24-hour provision contributes well to the curriculum and helps improve outcomes for residential pupils.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall. As a result, pupils make satisfactory progress. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects that they teach, and are conscientious and committed to developing the pupils' full educational potential. There are caring and kind relationships between staff and pupils, and the small class sizes offer frequent opportunities for one-to-one work. Staff are beginning to develop their skills in how to defuse any challenging behaviour at an early stage. Some staff are not fully effective in this so that pupils are sometimes removed from lessons unnecessarily and are not given the opportunity to return to learning speedily.

Pupils do not always understand their next steps in learning, because teachers do not consistently refer to pupils' individual learning goals in lessons. Pupils generally take pleasure in their learning, and there are often good-natured verbal exchanges in

lessons. Teachers work hard to make lesson activities interesting and good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly, but sometimes they set tasks that do not challenge all the pupils, particularly those with higher ability. Senior staff have introduced a new, potentially useful system to record pupils' attainment levels and progress, so that teachers can have a clearer understanding of the levels of work required. The system is too new to have made an impact upon pupils' progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality and effectiveness of the college's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy their learning because lessons contain activities planned to meet their interests. Educational and residential staff know the pupils well and value their views. As a result, pupils gradually develop positive attitudes to learning and work, and they regain their self-confidence. There are good links between the residential and education staff, including daily meetings to discuss any issues that might have arisen. These links result in improved outcomes for pupils, especially in their personal development.

Pupils are involved regularly in the life of the college and the wider community, including through the school council, and in fundraising for events such as Children in Need and Red Nose Day. Through the PSHE and citizenship programmes and educational visits, the school helps pupils to acquire an appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony. Attendance improves after pupils join the college, although it remains low. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory rather than better because teachers have not yet acquired all the necessary skills to de-escalate emerging challenging behaviour. Records of incidents and sanctions show that the use of sanctions for individual pupils generally decreases over time. However, behaviour and attendance records are not always monitored and analysed methodically so that staff can judge the effectiveness of the strategies that they employ. Nevertheless, relationships are generally good throughout the college and the atmosphere in lessons is positive and conducive to learning. Most pupils have a positive view of the future and are supported well in decisions about the next stage of their lives.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of residential and day pupils are good. The college maintains thoroughgoing procedures and practices for staff recruitment and new staff do not commence employment until all the relevant checks are carried out. The college has in place all the required policies for child protection, behaviour management and ensuring that pupils are kept safe. The college implements these policies well and reviews them regularly. Staff complete thorough risk assessments for individuals, activities, classes and accommodation. No health and safety risks were identified during the inspection in the education facilities or across the residential accommodation. The college carries out the required regular checks of portable electrical appliances and smoke alarms, and maintains records of practice

evacuations and checks on fire safety equipment. All staff receive training in many aspects of risk assessment and other areas of health and safety, such as first aid. All required safety training is up to date, including the training of all staff in child protection and at a higher level for designated persons. Pupils say that they feel safe and that staff take robust action whenever bullying is reported. In the rare event that residential pupils go missing, the college ensures that incidents are dealt with promptly and positively to ensure their safe return. Pupils are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and no pupils smoke. The food in the college is healthy and nutritious. The catering staff ensure that they meet individual dietary needs and provide vegetarian options on a daily basis. The college undertakes regular audits of the accommodation in order to improve access through a three-year plan as required by the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required checks on education and residential staff and others are carried out and are recorded appropriately in the single central register. All requirements are met.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The educational facilities and accommodation enable pupils to learn safely and effectively. All the teaching areas are clean, tidy and well maintained. Classrooms are spacious, well equipped and resourced to meet the differing needs of pupils. There are several suitable subject-specific facilities, such as for art and ICT. There is plenty of space for outdoor recreation and sporting activities. The residential accommodation within the main site is well maintained and provides sufficient facilities to meet the individual and collective needs of the residential pupils. Although it meets the national minimum standards, not all living spaces are as homely as they could be. Although the post-16 house provides opportunities for older residential pupils to live more independently, the communal space is quite cramped.

Provision of information

The college ensures that clear, accurate and up-to-date information is provided for parents and carers and to inspectors, Ofsted and the Department for Education on request. Parents and carers receive regular reports on pupils' personal and academic progress. However, the college does not make available sufficient detail on: particulars of the pupils' academic performance in the preceding year; the number of complaints registered during the preceding school year; the number of staff employed at the college; and, a summary of staff qualifications.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The college has a clear and well-written complaints policy and procedures that fully meet all requirements.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Under the strong and effective guidance of the new Principal, the leadership and management of the residential provision are much improved since the last social care inspection and are now good. The college sets out clearly the aims for the residential provision in the college prospectus and Statement of Purpose. The senior staff ensure that all staff consistently promote equality consistently within the residential provision and cater well for the pupils' diverse needs.

There is efficient management of the general routines of the residential provision. Good staffing levels ensure that the pupils' care needs are fully met and there are always additional, suitably qualified, senior managers on duty to provide residential staff with support and guidance.

All new staff undertake an intensive induction programme. Staff receive appropriate training and speak positively about the training programme provided, although the range of specialist training is not as broad as it could be. For example, it does not give staff a full understanding of pupils who harm themselves or have attachment difficulties. Three quarters of the staff have achieved a relevant minimum level 3 qualification, with the remaining staff currently working towards the qualification.

Under the new leadership arrangements, residential staff feel that they are extremely well supported and valued. They say that they are proud to work at the college. They feel that they are fully involved and are empowered to make decisions. The new leadership team has made significant improvements in the care practices adopted. Staff say that senior staff are approachable and are always available to listen to them.

Daily handover and staff meetings enable staff to keep up to date with the day-to-day operation of the residential provision and to provide consistency of care. Formal staff supervision is of good quality and a programme of annual appraisals will be undertaken in September 2012.

The college maintains positive links with parents and carers and provides them with good information relating to their children. Parents, carers and pupils say that they know how to make a complaint and that residential staff are always accessible. Most residential pupils stated that there are a number of people they could go to if they had concerns and were confident that their concerns would be acted upon. All complaints are responded to and addressed promptly. Residential pupils' records are safely stored. However, not all records of sanctions and missing pupils are comprehensively maintained or effectively monitored.

The college ensures that the views of residential pupils are regularly sought in relation to the quality of care they receive. Although Priory Education Services sees to it that external monitoring is undertaken on a regular basis, the satellite houses do not always receive external unannounced monitoring visits at the required frequency.

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 those listed below.⁵

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

- ensure that the following information is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils, and on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or an independent inspectorate:
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations
 - details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year
 - the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b)).

National minimum standards

The college meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- ensure that teachers always emphasise individual learning targets in lessons
- ensure that pupils always have a clear understanding of their next steps in learning
- improve teachers' skills in managing and defusing difficult behaviour
- ensure that teachers make skilful use of assessment information to set challenging work that meets the differing needs of all the pupils in the class.

⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

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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Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		✓		
Outcomes for residential pupils		✓		
Quality of residential provision and care		✓		
Residential pupils' safety		✓		
Leadership and management of the residential provision		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Residential special school for pupils with Asperger's syndrome and associated difficulties.		
Date school opened	1996		
Age range of pupils	11–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 27	Girls: 7	Total: 34
Number of boarders	Boys: 17	Girls: 7	Total: 24
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 27	Girls: 7	Total: 34
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,000–£120,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£98,000–£160,000		
Address of school	Newbury Manor Newbury Nr Mells Frome, Somerset BA11 3RG		
Telephone number	01373 814980		
Email address	farleighcollege@priorygroup.com		
Principal	Sharon Edney		
Proprietor	Priory Education Services		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Farleigh College, Frome BA11 3RG

You may remember that we inspected your school recently. Thank you for the help you gave us, by talking to us, completing your questionnaires and letting us see you at work and after school in your residential accommodation.

This letter is to let you know our judgements about the school.

- Farleigh College provides you with a satisfactory education, with a sound curriculum, so that you make steady progress in your studies.
- Your teachers and classroom staff carry out their work satisfactorily.
- Your behaviour is satisfactory, and you are becoming more self-confident.
- The school is good at making sure you are safe, healthy and happy.
- Those in charge make sure that the residential accommodation is of good quality, and those of you who stay overnight at the college are well cared for.

Although the school gets many things right, I have suggested making following improvements to the Principal.

- Teachers should make sure that you know your learning targets and your next steps in learning and that you all get work at the right level.
- Teachers should develop their skills in defusing challenging behaviour quickly.
- The college should make available all the necessary information to your parents or carers.

Perhaps you can help out by letting your teachers know if your work is too easy or too difficult.

I wish you every success in the future

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee
Lead inspector