

# Farleigh Further Education College

Inspection report for further education college

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## Information about the college

Farleigh Further Education College is based in Swindon. The college is part of the Priory Group and Priory Education Services providing specialist post 16 provision for students who have social and communication difficulties, particularly autism spectrum conditions. Some students have moderate learning difficulties and some have low level mental health problems. There are a range of options for learning such as, through the partnership with local further education colleges, in-house tuition and an independent living skills programme. The college offers therapeutic support alongside education and aims to meet the needs of students with differing levels of cognitive ability.

The college admits both day and residential students. At the time of inspection 26 of the 44 students were residential with a small number under the age of 18 years. The residential accommodation is located in four sites within the local community. The largest property generally accommodates first year students where there are higher levels of staff supervision. Resident students are both under and over 18 years of age and of mixed gender.

The college was last inspected in May 2010.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

**Adequate:** a service that only meets minimum requirements

**Inadequate:** a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Summary report

<b>Overall effectiveness of the provision</b>	good
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Outcomes for young people	good
Quality of service	good
Leadership and management	good
Safeguarding	good

## Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The overall effectiveness of the residential provision at this college is good. Staff are passionate about their role to support students to make progress that is significant to them. This can vary from personal self-care skills to securing a place at university. All students gain in confidence and attain skills in independence that helps to prepare them for life after college.

Safeguarding arrangements are strong and known by all the staff. There is a commitment to working with other agencies and parents, as the well-being of students is taken seriously. Risk management effectively balances safety with age-appropriate opportunities for students.

The collaborative working across teams contributes to a safe placement for each student. Care, education and therapy have students at the centre of their practice. Parents report that the college communicates with them well, sharing the struggles and the achievements of their child.

Equality and diversity is embedded well into the culture of the college. Students experience a welcoming and inclusive college environment. To be an individual with a strong sense of identity is promoted along with strategies to help others understand how to embrace difference.

Students enjoy the opportunities that residential life provides and report positively about their achievements. Parents and social care professionals praise the commitment of the staff and the flexibility of the senior management team to meet individual needs. Since the last inspection systems have improved to centralise key records such as sanctions, incidents and complaints.

All but one of the national minimum standards has been met. The shortfall is in relation to the recording of medication.

### What should the college do to improve further?

To improve the quality and standards of care further the provider should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that a written record is kept of all medication, treatment and first aid administered to students, giving name, date, medication/treatment, reason for administration (if not prescribed), which is signed by the responsible member of staff and is regularly monitored by an appropriate designated senior member of staff. A record is also kept of any refusals to accept and take medication usually administered by college staff, and of the return of any medication being kept and/or administered for a student to that student at the student's request. (NMS 14.9)

## Outcomes for young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Outcomes for residential students are good. They benefit from the security of an environment where staff are dedicated to support students in developing their personal and social development. This progress improves the emotional well-being of students and enables them to concentrate on their learning. The complex needs of some students means that there may be setbacks along the way. The skills and experience of the multi-disciplinary teams work collectively to support students, often creating bespoke programmes to meet their individual needs.

Students report they are generally happy with the college and enjoy the residential experience. 'It took a while to get used to it but now I really like it here', 'it's amazing' and 'this college is difficult at first but once you settle in, it is a really good place.'

Students benefit from the effective links with local colleges where some students have one to one support throughout their timetable, others have a support worker available if required and some study independently. This specialist college has a learning resource centre within the grounds of the local college where many students are enrolled. This base provides excellent support to students and is used flexibly according to individual need. Having this resource on site enables students to mix with their peers and have some independence with the back up of support staff. The learning resource centre provides a safe haven where students can go, knowing that there will be an adult that they can talk to. This base provides a venue for tuition, independent living skills, therapy sessions, a tuck shop and a place to go at break times.

Students are greeted at the learning resource centre by staff who are welcoming and supportive. Residential staff are deployed at this college base and directly with students throughout their learning. This ensures that students receive consistency in the care and support provided by staff who know them well in their learning environment and also in the residential provision. Students can easily contact members of the senior management team as they have offices located in the learning resource centre. This promotes the availability of senior management and

ensures that they are fully informed of current issues.

Students develop in confidence in an environment where their personal identity is treated sensitively within a culture of tolerance and acceptance. Students are supported to make sense of their own behaviour and traits associated with their autism, Asperger's syndrome or mental health. With this understanding and strategies to manage, students are then supported to take part in the community and prepare for their transition to independence.

Students are encouraged to use local leisure facilities and the college has paid for access to a gym. Activities are discussed and planned at student meetings in each residence. Students enjoy bowling, swimming, ice skating and the cinema. In residence, students enjoy games consoles, music and cooking. Some students report that they would like to have more activities arranged however, this is in conflict with their aims to be independent and manage a budget.

Students are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and provided with information about the dangers of alcohol, smoking and substance abuse. This is an effective approach from the college as there are minimal incidents relating to these behaviours and students are able to make safe choices. Discussions take place on sexual health matters and relationships. The college has arranged for some older students to help in the delivery of these topics, this has recognised the maturity of the older students and encourages the younger students to listen to them, as well as the staff.

Parents and staff report on many examples of progress for students. From small steps such as tying shoe laces to travelling independently on a bus. Students gaining in confidence and becoming fully engaged in the college programme after a period of not wanting to leave their bedroom. One motivator is that of work experience placements. Many students benefit from this opportunity to be in a work environment, having the sense of achievement and belonging. The college uses an external provider to secure work experience placements. This has additional benefits as the same provider is available to assist local students to find and maintain employment once they leave this college.

### **Quality of service**

The quality of the service is **good**.

Students benefit from good support services across the college. Staff have a very good understanding of student's individual needs and effectively support them. There is good collaborative working between learning support staff, the education team, the therapy team, support staff and the senior management team. This working together has a student focus and ensures that good levels of pastoral care are delivered.

New students are introduced to the college at a pace to meet their individual needs. There are opportunities to visit and through working with parents, carers and other professionals key information is shared and incorporated into care planning for this

college placement. Students receive handbooks advising them of the structure and routines of the college and this ensures that students know the college rules and expectations in order to support them in making suitable choices with regards to their behaviour.

Students benefit from the on site therapy team. A range of therapists can provide support to students at a venue that suits individuals. Creative therapy, speech and language, clinical psychology and counselling provide options for students to engage with. Sessions can be arranged individually or through group work. The therapy team are accessible not only to students but to parents and staff as well. This helps the adults caring for students to receive guidance and strategies on how best to support students who may be struggling with their mental and emotional health, and very often relationships. The therapy team have strong links with other agencies in the field of health and social care to ensure swift referrals when additional services are required.

In the largest residence, students are provided with a home cooked meal each evening. Students report that they like these meals and can have a choice. In the smaller houses students are expected to do their own cooking and cleaning with some staff support if required. Along with money management, these independent living skills prepare students for their transition to living in the community or university accommodation. All students are supported to prepare a packed lunch to take with them each day.

Staff administer any medication, secure storage is provided in each residence. A series of records can be cross referenced to confirm that students receive medication appropriately; however there are some gaps in the records when students have been absent. This practice has not followed college procedures as a simple code should be entered on the medication record to indicate if a student is away from college at the time. The majority of staff are trained in first aid and indeed some students have also completed a course in first aid skills. This valuable training enables students to act quickly to help themselves or others requiring first aid attention.

Residential accommodation varies across the four residences as each property has its own characteristics. The smaller properties are domestic and similar to family homes. They are suitably maintained and furnished. Students report that they like their bedrooms and the fact that they can personalise their space with pictures and belongings. The larger residence has recently had a new kitchen installed and there are further plans to redecorate other communal areas. Students in this accommodation benefit from en suite bathrooms.

## **Leadership and management**

The leadership and management are **good**.

Leadership and management of this residential college is good. The principal and the senior management team work well together and have a good grasp of the strengths of the college and areas for development. Due to the individual, and often complex,

needs of each student the senior management team are responsive and adaptable in providing bespoke placements. These are usually made up of an educational timetable, therapeutic input and engagement with other agencies. There is a strong emphasis to engage with students and their parents in order to get the maximum from the college placement. Several students reported that this college has provided them with 'opportunities', recognising other further education colleges would not be able to meet their particular needs.

Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the senior management team, the therapy team and the profile of the student group seeking placements at this college. Like many organisations, the college has had to manage constraints such as funding cuts and the general economic climate. This has led to a review of staffing and resources but the college continues to ensure staffing levels are suitable for the needs of the students.

Staff report that they receive regular training and support. The organisation has a comprehensive training package for all staff to access and professional development is monitored to ensure staff are up to date and compliant with the training programme. The designated person for safeguarding is training to be competent to deliver safeguarding training to others. This enhanced level of qualification will enable staff training to happen more frequently without relying on external training provider. A training update for staff on self-injurious behaviour has been commissioned and staff are contributing to this event by making particular requests relevant to the students in their care.

To promote effective communication across the four residential sites, team meetings follow a standard agenda and the minutes from each meeting are shared. Similarly the student house meeting minutes are shared to promote consistency while retaining individual characteristics of each residence. 'We are all one college' said a member of residential staff. This message is important for students to hear, to know that staff across the sites are in regular contact and adhering to the same set of policies and procedures. Given the disparate locations that make up this provision, the presentation and identity of one college is managed well.

Student views are sought individually, collectively through each residence meeting and widely across the college through the student council. The student council are engaging in the review of policies and have embraced their role to promote and address equality and diversity.

Since the last inspection some records have become centralised, this allows managers to monitor and review more effectively. Good use is made of feedback, complaints and compliments. The college responds to complaints in a timely manner and records confirm outcomes and satisfaction levels of the complainant. Overall, parents and social workers report good levels of satisfaction with the college and the communication they receive about their child. A parent reports that her child 'has grown so much' and how this college has been 'brilliant' for her child. Another parent reports on the 'massive difference' now their child can use the bus independently.



## Safeguarding

Safeguarding arrangements are **good**

The safeguarding of students is given high regard across the college staff teams. Staff recognise and understand the particular vulnerabilities of students who attend this college and strive to support students through creating a safe environment. Aspects of autism, Asperger's syndrome and mental health can significantly impact of the safety and well-being of students when out in the community and students are supported with strategies to protect themselves. There are detailed risk assessments for individual students; these documents support staff in providing the appropriate level of supervision and support.

All new staff are subject to suitability checks prior to commencing their work with students and this ensures that safer recruitment procedures are followed. Visitors and contractors are issued with a leaflet upon arrival at any of the college sites. This document advises them of the procedures to follow is they become aware of a safeguarding concern and the need to protect students and others.

There is a strong commitment to inter-agency working. The college has examples of where they have reported safeguarding matters to other agencies to ensure best practice principles are followed. The local authority report that there is good communication from the college and that advice is acted upon when required. The college has developed some effective links with the local community police officer, the local authority safeguarding team, the youth engagement worker and the disability hate crime ambassador.

All college staff receive training on safeguarding matters and the policies and procedures underpin this practice. In addition to staff receiving a code of conduct and guidance on safe working practices, students are equipped with the skills needed to keep themselves safe. For example, information is provided on the safe use of computers and social media, and a local proprietor of a licensed premises has arranged to talk with students about bar etiquette. This level of information supports students in having a good time while drinking and using social media, like many teenagers, with some boundaries to keep themselves and others safe from harm.

Students report that they feel safe at this college and understand that some college rules are there for their protection. There have been some incidents of bullying but students say that staff sort it out when it is reported. The senior management team have invited the student council to review the policies relating to bullying and behaviour. This is in response to the council raising discrepancies with sanctions for some negative behaviour and suggestions from students that some sanctions are too lenient. This level of engagement with students to review policies is good practice and values their contribution to the development of the college.

There have been very few incidents of students going missing and in most cases, students have failed to return back to the residence at the agreed time. Staff follow procedures to locate students when they are missing and have individual protocols

for those students considered at greater risk when away from staff supervision.

Staff are trained on behaviour management techniques with an emphasis on de-escalating incidents of behaviour when students may be challenging or distressed. Physical intervention is rarely used; the staff employ their skills of listening and supporting students at times of personal crisis. Sanctions may be issued as a result of breaking college rules. Consequences can include students missing out on an activity, a contribution to the residence such as some chores or a simple apology. The senior management team monitor such incidents that warrant any sanctions and collate this information across all the residences. This information contributes to identify any patterns or trends.

The college maintains a safe physical environment. A dedicated health and safety officer monitors compliance across the various sites. Health and safety matters are reported from the college to the wider organisation and external staff visit to complete inspections. This level of scrutiny ensures that a safe environment is maintained. Risk assessments and trip planners are used effectively to identify and minimise risk. This process allows students to enjoy activities, taking measured risks as part of their personal and social development such as going to the pub, sports activities and outings to theme parks.

## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of accommodation in further education colleges.