

21–23 October 2015

## Inspection dates

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Learners develop their confidence and skills well through good teaching, the high expectations of staff and a well-designed curriculum.
- The standard of work produced in practical areas is high; engineering and art and design learners' work is particularly creative.
- Learners develop good employability skills through a wide range of activities, which also enable them to make informed choices about study and work options after college. Learners develop very good communication and interpersonal skills through working at the college reception, café and farm shop.
- Many learners make great improvement in their levels of independence and in managing their behaviour.
- Learners leaving college make good progress into paid and voluntary employment, higher qualifications and supported or independent living arrangements.
- The college has improved its viability and sustainability through decisive and appropriate leadership.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Tutors do not measure carefully enough the progress learners make, and some of the targets set do not challenge the learners sufficiently. In addition, not all learners know how well they are doing.
- Observations of teaching and learning do not routinely identify the impact teaching makes on learners or what tutors need to do to improve their effectiveness.
- The self-assessment process does not identify effectively the college's key strengths and weaknesses; nor is it used to set measurable targets to help the college raise standards and build on current effective practice

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Fairfield Farm College is a residential and day independent specialist college operated by the Fairfield Farm Trust since 1975. It offers vocational programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, in horse studies, farming, horticulture, hospitality, customer care, office skills, retail and enterprise as well as independent and living skills. Just under half of the current learners are residential. The college also offers weekend breaks, respite care and holiday activities.
- Since the last inspection, the college improved the on-site work-based learning opportunities within the café, farm shop, reception area and conference facilities. Classroom accommodation in other vocational areas was also redesigned to integrate teaching with practical activities.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the recording and measurement of learner progress so that staff can:
  - use this information to celebrate successes
  - adapt, change or reinforce teaching and learning activities
  - produce short and medium targets that challenge and motivate learners.
- Improve the observation of teaching, learning and assessment by making sure that tutors and managers are clear:
  - how effective teaching and learning are for each learner
  - what actions are required to make further improvements.
- Ensure that the self-assessment process fully reflects the college's current quality of provision by:
  - making better use of the data collected to review the effectiveness of key aspects, such as recruitment, initial assessment, achievements, attendance, progress and destinations.
  - setting measurable quality improvement targets that will raise standards and improve the experience of the learners.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Following the appointment of a new Principal in April 2015, senior leaders and trustees reviewed the college provision, restructured the organisation and significantly reduced the residential accommodation. As a result, the college provision is more flexible and responsive to the needs of learners and more strongly focussed on achieving positive outcomes for learners.
- Senior leaders identified the need to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The support, challenge and professional development given to staff raised the standard of teaching in most areas. Where poor teaching continued, leaders and managers took decisive action. Managers continue to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively. Verbal feedback given to staff is good and leads to further improvements in teaching practice. However, some written evaluations of lesson observations do not pay sufficient attention to the impact of teaching on learning or give sufficiently clear guidance on how the tutor can improve further.
- The new self-assessment process is at an early stage of development. The views of trustees, staff and learners contribute to the report. However, the current report does not reflect the good work of the college in helping learners to achieve high standards and to make good progress towards their learning goals. Although the college collects data widely on all aspects of the learner experience, it does not make enough use of these to support the key strengths of the college or to set improvement targets.
- The curriculum meets the needs of learners very effectively. Senior managers responded positively to learners' requests for improved sporting facilities, a college youth club and holiday activities. Learners benefit from the very good range of vocational opportunities on offer. In addition to farming, equestrian, engineering, small animal care and horticulture activities, learners have increased contact with members of the public through the well-supported café and farm shop.
- The good contributions learners make to local and wider communities and their experiences in work and social settings prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Learners' involvement in a national learning disabilities rights campaign for fair access to further education included visiting the Houses of Parliament and lobbying their local MP and other politicians. The strategy to ensure that learners are protected from radicalisation and extremism is appropriate but at an early stage of implementation.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Since the last inspection, trustees have worked relentlessly with senior leaders to ensure that the college remains viable. They have improved the college environment, adapted appropriately to funding reforms and to a reduction in residential provision. In addition, the capability of the college to meet the needs of learners with complex needs has improved.
  - The new structure of the board of trustees and recent appointments strengthen the board's ability to scrutinise the work of the college and to hold senior leaders to account. Board members recognise the need to improve the use of data to analyse trends, set performance measures and focus on outcomes for learners.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Leaders and managers have created a strong safeguarding culture throughout the college. All staff are vigilant in ensuring that learners are safe and know how to keep themselves safe. The recording of low-level incidents and concerns is good and is used well to identify staff training needs and required changes in practice. Where actions are necessary, responses are timely and effective.
  - Staff benefit from good practical training that improves their confidence in dealing with challenging situations. Staff are skilled at identifying and preventing behaviours that may put learners at risk of physical harm to themselves or others. Staff manage incidents in a calm and appropriate manner.
  - Learners have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet at home, college and in the workplace. They know how and when to report any concerns or what to do if they receive unwanted or inappropriate requests.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Staff have high expectations of learners. Good teaching and a well-designed curriculum give learners a good college experience. A strong emphasis on providing diverse learning opportunities helps learners develop their confidence and self-esteem. This also improves their skills for independent living and prepares them for adult life.

- Well-qualified tutors use their high levels of experience and expertise effectively on programmes such as horticulture, engineering and equine studies. Tutors use a good range of effective questioning techniques during practical teaching activities in the college kitchen and farm to reinforce learning points and develop learners' thinking and decision-making skills.
- Tutors work very effectively, together with highly trained support staff, so that all learners can participate fully in challenging learning experiences. Support staff enhance the learning sessions with carefully considered individual attention, praise and practical support.
- Staff know their learners well. They use comprehensive and detailed initial assessment information to design meaningful individual learning programmes that take good account of each individual's key priorities. Tutors focus effectively on each individual's greatest needs.
- Tutors monitor and record learners' work and achievements carefully. However, they place too much emphasis on simply describing the activities that learners undertake and pay insufficient attention to the progress they make in improving or developing new skills. Learners do not always know well enough what skills they need to develop to move them closer to their goals of an independent life in the community. Progress is not measured carefully enough, making it difficult for staff to set challenging short-term targets.
- Resources are good. The effective use of specialist therapists, counsellors and psychologists enhances learners' progress well. The thoughtful redesign of teaching areas has given greater flexibility to run a wider range of learning activities and events. Learners can easily access outdoor and class learning areas. Information learning technology resources are used effectively to support learning and develop communication skills.
- Learners improve their communication skills well by serving customers in the community café and farm shop; and they develop friendships in their residential settings. Events such as the annual horse and dog show and other fundraising events provide further situations where learners can extend and build their confidence in dealing with unfamiliar people.
- Learners gain good awareness of their local communities and events in the wider world through a carefully planned tutorial programme and well-chosen work experiences.
- Learners improve their English and mathematical skills well. English and mathematics are an integral part of all learning activities. Learners practise their skills as they meet and greet visitors at reception, handle money in the café, measure out correct feed quantities for the animals, plan their weekly menus and learn to budget and shop for essential items for themselves.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

- Learners take pride in their life and work at the college. The elected student council meets weekly to discuss issues and plan events to enhance college life. Learners gain valuable social skills and build their confidence while developing their ideas and making their wishes known. Learners are currently fundraising and seeking support from trustees for a multi-use sports area.
- External work placements match learners' needs well. Staff links with local employers are good and provide learners and employers with a good level of support. As a result, learners can gain valuable experiences in real work environments. This experience increases learners' understanding of the vocational choices they have and enables them to make informed decisions about their future.
- Learners all participate in a wide range of activities that challenge and inspire them and develop their social and organisational skills. Learners enjoy interactive drama and music workshops, art trips and tractor rallies.
- Learners have good practical support in daily living, both as residential and day learners. As a result, they are more likely to progress into independent or supported living arrangements.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality are generally good. They take responsibility for their own timekeeping and encourage less-able learners to improve their skills. They learn to read the time on clocks and mobile phones. Consequently, they understand their timetables and routines and attend their sessions promptly.
- Learners make good progress in managing their behaviour. Many learners have challenging behaviour and difficulty relating to others. They learn to manage their behaviour well with sensitive support from staff. A newly introduced voucher reward system with learner of the week awards and enhanced job roles promote the development of appropriate behaviour very effectively.
- Learners learn the importance of health, safety and hygiene in every aspect of their practical work in the engineering workshop, horticulture centre and kitchens. They demonstrate this understanding well in

their everyday work. They learn to housekeep in the college houses, for example understanding the importance of keeping fridge doors closed and cleaning work surfaces properly. Learners become better equipped to live successfully in the local community.

- Learners take turns in helping prepare the daily lunchtime meals served to all staff and learners. They learn about healthy eating, understand the benefits of exercise and gain satisfaction and enjoyment from the varied outdoor learning programmes.

## **Outcomes for learners**

## **are good**

- Most learners make good or better than expected progress as a result of well-structured, stimulating learning sessions that develop a good range of skills and recognise achievement. The good, thorough and wide-ranging initial assessment identifies learners' starting points and their barriers to learning very effectively. However, the good progress made by learners is not always clearly recorded by tutors in written reviews. This makes the overall assessment of learners' overall progress difficult and time consuming for managers and learners are not always clear about what they have achieved.
- The standard of work achieved is high across the college. Vocational staff have good industry experience in farming, hospitality, engineering, retailing equine and customer service. Engineering learners produce and sell sculptures, bottle racks and Christmas decorations made out of old horseshoes; their recycling and re-using of equipment and materials around the college is excellent. Art and design learners have displayed and sold their work in the local Wylve Arts Trail. Learners demonstrate very high levels of care for the animals they work with.
- In the last two years, the vast majority of learners progressed onto work-based training, a higher-level qualification at another college or onto voluntary work. In 2015, one learner started an apprenticeship at a riding stables and another started paid employment with a national restaurant chain. The college maintains very good contact with leavers through social media and the annual reunion barbecue, but does not make enough use of feedback from past learners to influence the curriculum.

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	39
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Dr Tina Pagett
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.ffc.ac.uk">www.ffc.ac.uk</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	15	24	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
	16–19		19+		Total			
<b>Number of learners aged 14–16</b>	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ none</li> </ul>							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Nigel Evans, lead inspector

Margaret Garai

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the vice principal, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's draft 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 learners 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.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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