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Mr Alun Maddocks
Principal
Farleigh Further Education College – Frome
North Parade
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Dear Mr Maddocks

Short inspection of Farleigh Further Education College, Frome

Following the short inspection on 11–12 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the college was judged to be good in March 2013.

This college continues to be good.

The strengths identified at the previous inspection remain, and effective action has resulted in good progress in most areas for improvement identified at the inspection. The sustained destinations of learners remain good, with college staff working very effectively with local authorities to ensure a smooth transition into work, supported accommodation, further or higher education or their local community.

Your leaders and managers continue to adapt the provision well and respond effectively to the increasingly complex needs of the learners attending the college. Since the previous inspection, a governing body has replaced the advisory committee. The governors are beginning to hold the college leadership team and the managers of the Priory Group to account; however, it is too early to judge fully the effectiveness of their actions.

The very good standard of learners’ work reflects the high expectations set by your staff. The majority of learners now follow in-house programmes and the increasingly strong focus on giving learners realistic work experiences is preparing them well for adult life.

The previous inspection judged leadership and management to require improvement. You have made good progress in improving teaching and learning, improving the quality of resources in most of the college and making effective use of

the data collected. However, some teaching accommodation at the main college site remains poor.

Safeguarding is effective.

Developing a culture of safety and well-being is central to the work of all staff. The systematic reviewing of safeguarding arrangements, regular staff training and improved communication between education, residential and therapy staff have improved the timeliness and effectiveness of responses to safeguarding concerns or incidents.

The revised policies and procedures take account of recent legislation and you have produced an additional 'Prevent' policy. Your staff have completed refresher training, and are more confident in applying procedures.

You have a clear and strong focus on recognising the susceptibility and vulnerability of learners in the college and how best to keep them safe. There has been a good reduction in the number of serious incidents in the last year from 22 to eight, with five referrals to appropriate agencies. The number of low-level incidents and concerns recorded and monitored has reduced from 40 this time last year to only 24.

The focus on preventing young people from being drawn into extremist groups is strong. Staff understand the risks to learners and they know what to do if they have any concerns. The monitoring of learners who are at risk is appropriate and proportionate. Well-trained staff, and the designated safeguarding officers, create good links between the college and residential staff to enable a holistic approach to safeguarding learners.

Inspection findings

- The recent management report on teaching and learning produced a good analysis of the further improvements necessary for all learners to receive a high standard of teaching and for learners to make at least good progress towards their learning goals.
- Learners continue to make at least good progress during their time at college. Learners can clearly describe, in many cases passionately, how tutors have helped improve their confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Many learners form friendship groups for the first time. Academic achievement is generally strong. Learners overcome significant barriers to learning, including high levels of anxiety, self-harming, long periods out of formal education, challenging behaviour and poor mental health.
- The new observation of teaching and learning process is at an early stage of implementation and very few tutors have been observed so far. Generally, the system has a strong focus on the experience of learners and the progress they make. Written feedback to tutors following teaching and learning observations

lacks precision and does not always report on the progress made by learners over time. In a small minority of cases, outstanding judgements were given for elements of teaching that were either good or expected practice in lessons for learners with complex needs and challenging behaviour.

- The introduction of a business enterprise project is helping learners develop key employability and personal skills. In the current year, four learners successfully gained placements on supported internships with local employers as a money adviser, teaching assistant, tourist guide and grounds keeper.
- The initial assessment of learners during the first term is accurate, thorough and clearly identifies their starting points. Medium- and long-term learning goals are generally appropriate. In subsequent termly reviews, the recording of progress is less clear. Too often, learner activities are described, rather than comments made on progress. Tutors do not make enough reference to targets set in previous reviews or the overall progress made since the learner started at college.
- Despite the strong efforts of you and the leadership team, the majority of the teaching accommodation on the main college site remains poor. The smaller rooms in the learning centre are cramped, not suitably sound insulated and access to resources is restricted. As a result, learners do not have access to the wide range of learning experiences available in other teaching areas where accommodation is good. For example, the dedicated room for therapeutic activities together with the improved integration of therapists, education and residential staff has resulted in a more coordinated approach to meeting the needs of learners and staff developing skills and techniques that make learning more effective. The learning centre at Wiltshire College is spacious, well resourced and offers good support for learners attending courses at the college.
- Learners attending the art and design and practical skills workshop produce high-quality work in an environment that encourages and promotes good working practices. The introduction of a business enterprise element to the practical skills sessions motivates learners and contributes to them developing skills in mathematics, English, communication and problem solving. The design, marketing and production of picnic benches and wooden reindeer develop learners' team-working, interpersonal and organisational skills well. The opportunity to share in any profits made when items are sold adds to the motivation of learners.
- Trainers have devised and delivered a wide range of appropriate training to all teaching and support staff to help them manage learners' challenging behaviour. As a result, staff deploy more effective interventions to manage learners' behaviour. Staff are positive about how this has helped them work with the complex needs that learners often present.

- All staff support learners very effectively in managing their own behaviour. Education and residential staff identify potential challenging or disruptive behaviour early and escalating problems are diffused effectively. As a result, fewer serious incidents occur.
- Managers have accurately targeted training to job roles, management responsibilities and staff need. Staff report they are more confident in managing the range of learners' needs. They refer learners to support services where appropriate, and work in partnership with the learners and other professionals, parents and carers.
- Support staff work well with tutors in lessons to support learning. All staff know learners well. They are able to make considered and appropriate responses to learners' challenging behaviour as they have a good understanding of agreed strategies to de-escalate potential confrontations and outbursts, enabling learners to remain engaged in their lessons and learning.
- Due to the good sharing of the notes from the therapy team's weekly meetings, all teaching, support and residential staff understand each learner's progress and development needs, as well as barriers to their involvement and learning. This enables all involved in the individual's learning and care to be aware of changes in behaviour and of any strategies to support them.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- as a matter of urgency, proposals to improve the accommodation at the main college site are implemented
- the current termly student review system clearly identifies the progress made by learners from their starting points and leads to improved target setting for learners
- written feedback to tutors observed is more precise, gives clear guidance on what the tutor needs to do to improve further and reports on the progress made by learners over time.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we were assisted by the head of education as nominee. We met with the Principal and senior leaders. We visited three sites to observe teaching, learning and assessment and look at learners' work. We held meetings with learners, staff, parents and employers. We reviewed documents relating to individual learners, overall performance of the college and safeguarding.