

# Short inspection of Fairfield Farm College (Fairfield Farm Trust)

Inspection dates:

10–11 December 2019

## **Outcome**

Fairfield Farm College (Fairfield Farm Trust) continues to be a good provider.

## **Information about this provider**

Fairfield Farm is a residential and day independent specialist college situated on a 26-acre farm site. It has been operated by the Fairfield Farm Trust since 1975. At the time of the inspection, 102 learners who have learning difficulties and disabilities and complex needs were studying vocational training programmes from pre-entry level to level 1. Learners can choose to study equine and stable management, farming and animal management, horticulture, catering, customer service in the college cafe, customer care and office skills, retail, enterprise and the I-Curriculum, which increases their knowledge of how to live more independently. Thirteen learners live in houses based near the college. Since the previous inspection, the Hope Nature Centre, set in 15 acres of country park, has become part of the Trust. This has resulted in a greater variety of learning experiences, where learners develop their work skills in real-life contexts.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Learners are enthused by the wide range of education and training experiences available at the college. They learn new academic and vocational knowledge and develop personal and practical skills in the many learning settings and the residences. This learning enables them to move successfully to their next steps, such as employment, further study, volunteering and semi-independent living.

Learners benefit from the support they receive from staff and job coaches when participating in work-related activities at indoor and outdoor settings. These include the college shop, café and gardens, and a variety of work-experience placements, such as the Hope Nature Centre, a local holiday village and supermarkets.

Learners thrive at the college. They significantly improve their ability to communicate with their peers, staff and members of the public. They become more confident and resilient and develop behaviours that meet workplace standards and expectations. Learners feel safe and demonstrate effective health and safety practices.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and managers are ambitious about what they want their learners to know and do while attending the college. Through their close work with the local authority, they have developed a comprehensive and challenging new curriculum. This is planned and sequenced logically so that learners build on their previous learning. Consequently, learners develop new knowledge and vocational skills. They improve their social skills, such as team working, speaking and listening, and the safe use of a wide range of workplace equipment.

Staff develop good individual learning programmes based on learners' starting points, goals and aspirations. Learners trial a wide range of subjects in year one of their two-year programme. They use this experience to make informed choices about the curriculum that they study in subsequent years. Learners also study the I-curriculum. This helps them to develop the skills they need to live more independently in the community, for example independent travel, road safety, health and safety and staying safe online. The wide range of education and training experiences available ensures that learners are prepared well for the opportunities and responsibilities in their next step or transition out of college.

Leaders ensure that Prevent and safeguarding training is meaningful for learners at all levels. Leaders have carefully thought through the concepts that learners need to understand, and they rightly recognise that learners need to learn to make informed decisions and feel able to say no. Learners who attend the student council extend their knowledge of democracy through their involvement in the voting process for student council members.

Teachers are trained well and have expert knowledge and expertise of their subjects. They use these effectively to ensure that learners increase their knowledge from a basic level to a more complex understanding. For example, in equine studies, teachers provide learners with helpful examples of common poor health and safety practices and the potential consequences for horses and staff.

Most teachers use a range of innovative and age-appropriate teaching and learning strategies to motivate learners to improve their knowledge and skills. For example, in English, teachers develop learners' listening and writing skills using a favourite popular music song. Learners write the lyrics out neatly and are expected to make few errors in spelling and punctuation.

Teachers ensure that learners embed key concepts of knowledge by designing effective assessment activities to help them recall and consolidate their learning over time. Most teachers set learners demanding tasks which help to build up their knowledge and skills and improve on what they know and what they can do. However, a few staff, particularly at the Hope Nature Centre, do not break down tasks into manageable chunks of learning so that learners can achieve them and work more autonomously.

Well-trained support staff work closely with teachers to provide effective support for learners. Staff reduce the level of support successfully over time as learners become more independent. For example, learners who join the college with an over-reliance on electronic communication are supported well by staff and broaden their skills in preparation for transition to the adult community. Through effective intervention and support from therapists, they become confident verbal communicators.

Most teachers check learners' understanding frequently by recapping knowledge and asking questions which extend and secure their learning. Many provide learners with clear feedback about how to improve their work. However, a few teachers do not do this well enough. As a result, a few learners do not know how to improve or apply the learning to the next piece of work.

Most learners participate in work experience, supported internships and volunteering. This helps them develop new knowledge, such as housekeeping, ground works, caring for the elderly and hairdressing. Leaders and managers are working with a range of partners to increase the opportunities for all learners to participate in learning experiences in sectors that match their interests and ambitions.

Most learners make good or better progress towards achieving ambitious and challenging curriculum goals. Learners who study on foundation and study programmes achieve relevant and beneficial vocational qualifications, such as sports leadership, employability and personal development.

Leaders and managers ensure that learners benefit from good, impartial careers advice and guidance. A range of guidance staff work closely with learners to achieve realistic objectives. In 2018/19, most learners who left the college progressed to destinations relating directly to their goals, aspirations and educational, health and care plan (EHCP) targets.

Leaders, managers and trustees have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They have been highly effective in managing the recent significant growth in learners with more complex needs and the development of a broader curriculum offer. Leaders have made significant improvements to the management of the college and its provision. This includes new trustees, new senior managers, teaching and support staff. Leaders and trustees recognise that the Hope Nature Centre has resulted in more learning opportunities for learners, but the quality of the training there is not yet as good as at the main college site.

Leaders, managers and staff create a calm and understanding environment that allows learners to focus on learning and significantly improve their behaviours. They learn respect and alternative methods for expressing their emotions, needs and wishes, and so that they can practice social norms and replicate the expectations of the workplace.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is at the heart of the college culture. They work well with staff and external agencies, such as the police, to keep learners safe when learning, training and living at the residences. Staff are well informed and correctly follow college safeguarding procedures. Managers conduct appropriate checks to ensure staff are suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults. The safeguarding team uses local information well to inform staff and learner training. Trustees and leaders review carefully any safeguarding incidents, identify themes and act on them immediately.

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

- Leaders and trustees should ensure that staff at the Hope Nature Centre provide learners with the same high-quality learning and training experiences as learners receive at the main college site.
- Leaders and managers should continue to increase the number and range of partnerships with employers and community groups so that more learners can gain access to training and learning in sectors that match their interests and ambitions.
- Teachers should provide all learners with sufficiently detailed and constructive feedback on their written work so that they know how to improve, apply the learning to the next piece of work and can move on quickly to acquire additional new skills.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131875
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<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ffc.ac.uk">www.ffc.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Tina Pagett
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21–23 October 2015

## Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Fairfield Farm College (Fairfield Farm Trust) was judged to be good in October 2015.

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the further education and skills inspection handbook and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

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