

Farleigh Further Education College (Frome)

Farleigh Sixth Form College, North Parade, Frome, Somerset BA11 2AB

Inspection of residential provision

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this further education college with residential accommodation

Farleigh Further Education College (Frome) is an independent specialist college providing post-16 education for students with autistic spectrum conditions, Asperger syndrome and associated complex needs, including mental health and behavioural difficulties. The residential accommodation is housed in eight properties in the community of Frome and two neighbouring towns, although not all houses are being used currently. At the time of this inspection, 27 young people were accessing there residential provision.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 November 2021

Overall experiences and progress of young people, taking in account **requires improvement to be good**

How well young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The college is not yet delivering good help and care for young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 4 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of young people: requires improvement to be good

This service requires improvement to be good due to weaknesses in the areas of help and protection and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Leaders and managers are aware of the weaknesses and are making improvements. However, these improvements are in the early stages of development and need more time to embed.

Staff have built strong and effective relationships with the young people. Staff know the young people well and sensitively support them to develop their sense of self and personal identity. Respect of one another's individual needs and differences are central to the positive relationships between staff and young people.

Staff support young people to become more independent and to develop the skills that help them to progress effectively into adulthood. Staff challenge the young people appropriately to help them to reach their full potential.

Young people take part in a wide range of activities in the houses and in the local community. For example, they attend local clubs and gyms, and one young person is part of the local brass band. These opportunities help the young people to develop confidence and make friends outside of college. Young people also learn to develop their own personal interests and have opportunities to relax and socialise together.

Young people are supported to understand their health needs, including any medication they may need. When required, specialist health input is provided. This includes referrals to mental and sexual health services. However, therapeutic input is not clearly evidenced in young people's placement plans, which hinders cohesive working.

Young people know how to complain and any complaints are responded to appropriately. However, there is a lack of feedback to the complainant to see if they are happy with the outcome.

The quality of residential provision is good. There is sufficient space within each of the houses for the number of young people who live there. Young people like the houses and have personalised their bedrooms to suit their individual tastes.

Staff support young people to attend education. When young people refuse to attend education, additional work is carried out to resolve this when possible. The effectiveness of communication between care and education staff is variable. Leaders and managers are aware of this weakness and are taking action to improve it.

How well young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Young people spoken to said that they feel safe at the college. They said they have a number of staff, including tutors, who they would be comfortable speaking to if they had any concerns. One social worker noted that this was an area of improvement for their young person, as previously they would not talk about things that were worrying them.

Safeguarding practice requires improvement. Although staff refer safeguarding concerns and act on the guidance they are given, some records do not reflect these actions. This does not help leaders and managers to monitor and assess safeguarding matters effectively. Leaders and managers have identified this as an area for development and are working hard to embed improvements into practice, although more work is needed to ensure it is consistent throughout.

Staff work with young people to develop their understanding of risk and develop strategies to keep themselves safe. Staff and external professionals work with young people on online safety and in relation to healthy relationships and consent. However, risk assessment records are complex documents that lack clarity about pertinent risks and do not consistently reflect changes in risk following an incident or safeguarding concern. Some risk assessments say that there has been a safeguarding concern but lack detail on what this concern is or the associated risk. Lack of important information does not help staff to manage risks effectively.

Behaviour is managed well, using individual approaches suited to the young people's needs. Staff support young people to talk with each other and/or staff following incidents. These discussions help young people to develop their skills in identifying and managing their own emotions and feelings and learning about others' feelings. Restraint has not been used.

Staff recruitment follows safer recruitment guidance, which helps to keep young people safe. The houses provide young people with a safe and secure environment in which to live. Regular fire drills are held, which ensure young people know what to do in the event of a fire.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has changed. A new head of college and a new head of residential provision took up their posts at Easter 2021. The senior leadership team is ambitious for the college's future. Leaders understand the strengths and areas for development and have a clear development plan in place.

Monitoring by managers requires development. Although improvements have been made these are not fully embedded into practice. In addition, monitoring of the quality of care lacks depth and critical scrutiny.

Young people's plans are detailed and demonstrate an understanding of the young person's needs. However, these are lengthy documents in need of review and streamlining to make them effective working plans.

Staff supervision is good quality and provides staff with an opportunity to talk about young people. Leaders and managers address practice issues effectively with staff, which, when required, includes effective disciplinary action. Since the change in senior leaders, the quality of supervision given to house managers has improved. This is now good quality and helps them to develop.

Staff benefit from receiving good-quality training. This includes training related to young people's individual needs as well as regularly updated mandatory training.

Staff are positive about their colleagues and they work together effectively to achieve positive outcomes for the young people. There are sufficient staff in each of the houses to meet the current needs of the young people.

The college website is out of date and does not reflect the current residential provision or details of the residential manager.

Parental feedback is generally good. Parents praise staff for their commitment to the young people, the care they provide and the progress young people are making. The feedback from social workers is very similar. They also said that staff are very good at communicating with them.

What does the college need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure any therapeutic input is clearly evidenced in, and is part of, the young person's individual plans.
- Ensure risk assessments are effective working documents that provide clear guidance for staff on the young person's risks. Ensure that risk assessments are reviewed and updated in the light of incidents or safeguarding events.
- Ensure safeguarding records provide a comprehensive record of all actions taken to protect young people. This includes records of any meeting or relevant documents.
- Ensure that the views of complainants are sought and recorded to confirm whether they are satisfied with the outcome and findings of complaint investigations.
- Ensure monitoring systems are further improved and embedded in managers' practice. In addition, managers should increase the depth of their monitoring to ensure it is effective.
- Ensure the college's website is updated and kept under review so as to provide accurate information to those who may wish to apply to the college.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Further education college with residential accommodation details

Social care unique reference number: SC041633

Principal/CEO: Nicola Everett

Inspectors

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

Clare Nixon, Social Care Inspector

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