

Inspection of Farnborough College of Technology

Inspection dates: 10 to 13 May 2022

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Education programmes for young people	Outstanding
Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

Farnborough College of Technology is a medium-size general further education college. The provider has two campuses at Farnborough and Aldershot. The Aldershot campus is almost exclusively for construction-based programmes.

At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 2,050 learners studying education programmes for young people courses, 670 apprentices and 1,000 adult learners. There were approximately 75 learners in receipt of high-needs funding, of whom 15 were taking part in supported internships.

There were also 160 part-time learners aged 14 to 16 years studying primarily construction courses at both campus sites.

The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

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

The vast majority of learners and apprentices, including those with high needs, have excellent attitudes towards their learning. They rightly enjoy their learning and the opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and professional behaviours. This helps to ensure that most learners and apprentices achieve very well in their studies and move on to further or higher education and employment.

Learners and apprentices benefit from strong working relationships with one another and with staff. They flourish in a college culture of mutual respect. Learners and apprentices respond very well to the clear expectations for behaviour that all staff set. For example, in level 3 catering, learners value being referred to as 'chef' by their teacher, which helps develop a culture of mutual respect in the kitchen. Most learners have high rates of attendance at lessons. They arrive on time and ready to learn.

Learners and apprentices are rightly positive about the help and support from staff to help them achieve, grow in confidence and develop their character. They value how well staff know, understand and respond to their individual learning and pastoral needs and aspirations. Pastoral support, further increased over the course of the pandemic, is excellent. Leaders have recognised that a few learners and apprentices struggled in their attitudes toward learning when returning from the pandemic. They put in place sensible interventions to help them successfully. As a result, learners and apprentices facing various obstacles and challenges continue in their learning and achieve well. They know their options for their next steps after completing their studies at college.

Learners and apprentices have opportunities to participate in a range of additional activities. They take part in new interests, hobbies and pursuits that allow them to learn about topics beyond their immediate experience. Learners and apprentices develop their knowledge of how to keep physically and mentally healthy. For example, learners and apprentices recently took part in a health and well-being conference, covering topics such as emotional well-being, cancer awareness and healthy relationships. They participate in entrepreneurial competitions. Consequently, learners and apprentices improve their understanding of wider society and are supported to become positive and responsible members of their communities.

Learners and apprentices feel safe at college. They have confidence in staff to challenge bullying, harassment and discrimination. They learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. Staff help learners and apprentices learn how to keep safe in the workplace. For example, learners on supported internships have a secure understanding of the health and safety requirements for their placements. Level 3 carpentry apprentices know how to use their equipment safely.

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

Governors, leaders and staff are highly ambitious for all learners and apprentices, including those with high needs. They have been especially successful in helping learners and apprentices in developing the professional behaviours that they need for the future.

Leaders and managers use their very well-established links with local businesses, industry and community groups to shape the courses, qualifications and training they offer. Managers in the different departments then use their links with employers in their industries to shape the curriculum at course and department level. For example, modern facilities for engineering, composites and aerospace engineering have been supported by local employers and industry organisations. Leaders and managers consider carefully the needs of learners and apprentices when designing courses. For example, managers and staff tailor programmes carefully to meet the needs of learners with high needs. As a result, these learners become increasingly independent and prepared for adult life and, where appropriate, move on to voluntary or paid employment.

Managers and staff carefully consider the needs of learners when planning courses. For example, managers and staff create bespoke teaching and training for learners with high needs that meet their personal interests, as well as academic requirements.

Highly experienced teaching staff plan and sequence learning skilfully so that learners and apprentices master substantial new skills over time. For example, level 3 photography learners become progressively expert at manipulating images using industry-standard photo-editing software. Level 2 and 3 catering learners become increasingly skilled in pastry arts, such as making souffles successfully. Level 3 adult learners in counselling become fluent in applying a range of psychoanalytical theories in their professional and personal settings.

Teaching staff use a range of very effective teaching strategies and techniques that help learners and apprentices make progress quickly. They use their comprehensive understanding of learners' and apprentices' learning and pastoral needs to inform and adapt their teaching. Teaching staff work very adeptly with learning support staff to support those learners and apprentices with additional needs. For example, teaching and support staff use activities that encourage and challenge learners with high needs so that they improve their communication skills and become more independent.

Teaching staff revisit knowledge and skills frequently to help learners and apprentices practise and consolidate their learning. For example, GCSE mathematics learners benefit from weekly revision activities that help to embed key mathematical knowledge. Adult learners on English for speakers of other languages courses benefit from additional lessons that help them to practise and master English more quickly.

Learners and apprentices benefit greatly from high-quality learning technology, learning environments and equipment. For example, level 2 and 3 hair professional apprentices work in a fully resourced working salon that helps them develop their technical and interpersonal skills very well. Adult learners studying construction at the Aldershot campus use a range of materials and equipment that reflect building and construction sites, preparing learners for employment very effectively. Level 3 learners in games development rapidly develop their technical and programming skills using industry-standard design tablets.

Most staff use rigorous and frequent assessments to check learners' and apprentices' understanding. They intervene quickly to resolve gaps in learning. Staff provide constructive and timely feedback that learners and apprentices use to improve their work and skills. Staff training apprentices do not use assessment consistently well to understand apprentices' progress in the workplace. As a result, a small minority of apprentices are not sufficiently supported to make rapid progress in their studies.

Highly experienced and enthusiastic staff help most apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to become better at their jobs. For example, level 3 motor vehicle apprentices learn quickly how to complete essential car maintenance tasks. Level 2 and 3 hair professional apprentices become more adept at working with customers. Staff support apprentices to develop their numeracy and literacy skills well, which helps them in their jobs. Most staff prepare apprentices for their final assessments effectively. Managers and staff do not ensure that training programmes are sufficiently tailored to meet employers' specific needs. As a result, a minority of apprentices do not develop the exact skills needed for their individual job roles.

Leaders and managers have designed adult courses that provide learners with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful and contribute positively to their communities. For example, staff support learners who speak English as an additional language to gain rapidly the language skills they need to participate in society. Experienced staff help learners who are returning to education to develop their academic skills and confidence with sensitivity. Consequently, learners improve their self-esteem and develop essential social, academic and work skills.

Staff help adult learners develop the skills and confidence to engage with their communities and gain employment quickly. For example, military veterans on the 'Building Heroes' programme quickly gain valuable skills in construction to re-enter civilian life and prepare for employment.

Learners with additional needs flourish in a culture of high expectations, expert support and care. Highly skilled specialist staff work closely with learners with high needs to help them develop their academic and social skills. They use their detailed understanding of learners' specific needs to support them to gain qualifications and become more independent. For example, staff use a comprehensive digital citizenship programme that helps learners with high needs to use social media safely

and independently. Learners with high needs benefit from high-quality and meaningful work experience. Those on supported internships gain valuable employment skills and professional behaviours. As a result, most interns gain paid employment at the end of their course.

Almost all learners aged 16 to 19 complete relevant and well-planned work experience or work-related activities that help them to develop professional behaviours and understand better their next steps. They benefit from substantial, high-quality careers advice and guidance that ensures they are very well informed about their next steps. Consequently, a high proportion of learners and apprentices move on to further or higher education or permanent employment.

Staff offer learners and apprentices a comprehensive and diverse range of additional activities which are very well attended. Staff help learners and apprentices to be well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, in recognition of Gurkha soldiers stationed nearby, learners and apprentices recently took part in a Nepalese Appreciation Day. Staff encourage learners and apprentices to develop their interests, talents and personal qualities that will help them thrive in life. Staff provide learners and apprentices with substantial opportunities to improve their mental and physical health, for example through participation in the Couch to 5k challenge.

Governors, leaders and managers have a detailed understanding of the strengths of the college. Where they have identified areas for improvement, they are taking reasonable steps to resolve these issues. Governors know their roles and responsibilities thoroughly. They use their skills and experience to help guide and develop the college's strategic direction. They know the strengths of the college well but are less aware of the areas that need to improve in apprenticeships.

Leaders are aware of the workload of teachers and support staff. They have taken actions to help staff work efficiently and maintain their well-being, such as through the introduction of new electronic systems which helps to reduce workload. As a result, most staff feel well supported by leaders. Teachers rightly speak with enthusiasm about the training they have received from leaders to become better teachers. Leaders and managers provide a range of training activities, such as helping staff to gain additional teaching qualifications, which helps staff to improve their practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The highly experienced and qualified safeguarding team ensure that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities to keep learners safe. When safeguarding incidents occur, the safeguarding team work diligently and swiftly to provide students with the help, support and care they need. The safeguarding team use their links with external agencies and organisations, such as housing charities, to support students effectively.

Learners and apprentices feel safe at the college. They value the inclusive and welcoming culture and atmosphere that leaders have created. As a result, they are comfortable reporting incidents that make them feel uncomfortable and talking to staff when they have worries or concerns about their own well-being or that of another student. Staff have taken reasonable steps to support the LGBTQ+ community within the college, such as through preferred pronoun campaigns, which help the vast majority of learners in these groups to feel accepted within the college.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130689
Address	Boundary Road Farnborough Hampshire GU14 6SB
Contact number	01252407003
Website	www.farn-ct.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Virginia Barrett
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2011
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of quality, 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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