

# Farleigh Further Education College

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Tracey Zimmerman, His Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Address:</b>	North Parade Frome Somerset BA11 2AB

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the first reinspection monitoring visit to Farleigh Further Education college following publication of the inspection report on 6 May 2022 which found the provider to be inadequate overall. The effectiveness of leadership and management, the quality of education, personal development and behaviour and attitudes were inadequate.

Farleigh Further Education College (FFEC) is an independent specialist residential college owned by Aspris Children's Services. It offers provision for young people with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including pervasive development disorder or Asperger syndrome traits. Students often have other complex needs. All students are in receipt of funding for high needs.

### Themes

**What progress have leaders made in ensuring that quality assurance processes, both at the college and with external providers, are effective?**

**Reasonable progress**

Most of the college's current senior leadership and management team have been appointed since the previous inspection. The previous leadership team is no longer at the college. The college's new team now includes an executive headteacher, two deputies and a director with responsibility for governance.

The new team has brought a renewed focus, direction and expertise to all aspects of quality improvement at the college. Working closely and collaboratively, the team has concentrated on action planning for comprehensive improvement to the quality of the provision. As part of this, they have made rapid and correct assessments of what needs to improve, and how that will be achieved. Their assessment includes identifying fundamental weaknesses in the strategic and operational aspects of the provision. However, the team has only very recently begun to implement a wide range of new systems and processes, including a quality improvement cycle. Consequently, the impacts of these improvement actions are, for the most part, negligible.

Leaders have reviewed thoroughly whether their working links with two external colleges of further education are providing consistently good outcomes for students. As a result, they have ended one link and retained the other. They have also retained a relationship with an external training provider.

Leaders have taken robust action to ensure that the curriculum offer is what students need. They have closed some provision and ended services which do not add value to the students' learning, their life skills or the progress they make. While focusing strongly on improving the provision as it stands, the new leadership and management team has ambitious plans for the future of the college.

The team has identified rightly that the college, as currently constituted, does not meet the best interests and needs of certain cohorts of students with high needs, not least in respect of the vocational courses offered. While plans are not yet in place for the college's future or its location, leaders are working on the assumption that they will maintain the current provision over the next two years while progressively implementing a new strategy.

**What progress have leaders made in developing an ambitious, well-planned, well-taught and coherent curriculum which includes access to specialist careers information, advice and guidance and therapeutic support? Reasonable progress**

The new senior leadership team have devised a curriculum that includes developing students' independent living, personal and social skills. Curriculum topics include the acceptance of others, identifying needs and child-on-child abuse.

At the beginning of the course, students participate in a six-week assessment programme, which helps to identify what they know and can do. Tutors use this information on their starting points and the targets identified in their education, health and care plans to devise a curriculum suitable for each student.

Students receive information from staff which provides them with a thorough introduction to the college. This includes learning about the repurposed building, safeguarding procedures, expectations for behaviour and attendance and how to produce an initial career plan.

Leaders have developed a comprehensive staff training plan, which focuses on improving staff's teaching skills. Leaders use set dates for training to address the staff development needs that are identified as a result of quality assurance activities, such as visits to lessons and the scrutiny of learner work. Senior leaders have recognised rightly that some staff require more intensive support and provide them with weekly sessions to help plan and prepare their teaching.

Leaders have recognised rightly that the specialist therapy required by students to help them to access the curriculum is yet to be provided to all. This is because leaders have been unable to obtain the services of fully trained staff. However, plans are in place to address this, and leaders are working with a local university to provide placement opportunities for year 3 occupational therapists.

Students benefit from employability training that enables them to explore various careers and receive ongoing careers guidance. Tutors are also supporting students to find and participate in appropriate work placements based on their career interests. However, the impact of these recent changes to the curriculum content are yet to be seen.

Leaders are passionate that students study an appropriately challenging curriculum, which enable them to make the expected progress towards achieving their goals and learning new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Staff are supporting those students whose needs cannot be met fully, to find alternative, appropriate education, training or employment.

**What progress have leaders made in putting actions promptly in place to ensure that all students are safe and feel safe?**

**Reasonable progress**

Immediately after the previous inspection, senior leaders appointed new staff to oversee and manage safeguarding at the college. These members of staff are appropriately qualified and bring a range of relevant knowledge and experience to the college, such as residential care management.

Leaders identify promptly lessons to be learned from previous safeguarding incidents and put in place actions to help continually improve the safeguarding arrangements.

Leaders have made changes at the college to help students to feel safe, and to know who and how to report their concerns.

Leaders and managers seek students' feedback on all aspects of college life, including feeling safe. They use a range of methods to obtain information, such as questionnaires, the student council and keyworker discussions. Leaders use their findings to shape the support offered to students.

Staff take part in comprehensive and regular safeguarding training. Leaders have developed a training curriculum for staff that includes topics such as how to recognise sexual harm and child-on-child abuse, a young person-centred approach to support, staying safe online and improving their understanding of the LGBTQ+ student community. Although leaders check staff understanding of these topics at the end of each term, staff are not provided with feedback and are unable to use it to identify and address their gaps in knowledge.

Leaders recognise rightly that the safeguarding culture at the college requires further development so that all learners are confident that staff will respond promptly to their concerns.

**What progress have leaders made in putting in place arrangements that ensure that those responsible for governance hold leaders to account fully? Reasonable progress**

Senior leaders have very recently implemented comprehensive new governance arrangements for FFEC. As a result, it is not yet possible to judge whether these arrangements will provide senior leaders with the information they need and in sufficient depth to monitor the quality of education and students' progress. However, directors' oversight of the college has been thorough and frequent since the previous inspection.

Senior leaders' revised arrangements are part of a new corporate approach to performance management at the college, schools and care settings in the Aspris group. The approach is based on a senior leader's weekly, monthly and termly review of performance data reported through the framework of carefully structured meetings. The senior leader in turn reports to the Aspris chief operating officer. As such, the approach is, at least initially, about performance management rather than strategic-level governance. Nonetheless, senior leaders intend to use the data reported to hold college leaders and managers to account.

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