

# Inspection of Farnborough College of Technology

Inspection dates: 11 to 14 March 2025

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

## Information about this provider

Farnborough College of Technology is a general further education college in Hampshire. It has two main campuses in Farnborough and Aldershot and provides education for adults in Fleet.

Learners study and train in a broad range of vocational, technical, academic and professional courses, including apprenticeships at levels 2 to 7. At the time of inspection, there were 2,161 learners on education programmes for young people at levels 1 to 3, including T-level courses in education and early years, engineering and manufacturing and digital production, design and development. There were 591 adult learners on courses such as English for speakers of other languages and counselling. There were 854 apprentices training in, for example, engineering, construction and motor vehicle. There were 61 learners with high needs.

Since September 2023, a number of areas of the Farnborough campus have been closed with learners and staff relocated, including off site, due to issues with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

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

Learners and apprentices are highly motivated, work hard and are keen to learn in college and at work. Their professional behaviours and conduct are excellent. They attend well, arrive on time for their lessons and are ready to learn. Learners and apprentices value and enjoy the welcoming and respectful culture staff have created, they grow in confidence and flourish as a result.

Most learners studying education programmes for young people develop their knowledge and skills well to produce work of a good and sometimes exceptional standard. In art and design, students use their talents to create high-quality illustrations for the local library. In catering, learners sell food at festivals that they create from ingredients they have grown sustainably. However, too few learners studying AS- and A-level courses achieve the qualifications they set out to study. Most learners and apprentices achieve well, and a significant minority achieve distinction grades.

Adult learners learn new knowledge to help them in their jobs, improve their employment prospects or acquire the academic skills they need for higher levels of education. In counselling, clinical psychologists help learners develop techniques to support people that are bereaved or dealing with trauma. Local people who are unemployed benefit from training for high-quality jobs in airport operations. Learners studying access to allied health professions become highly competent in their research and evaluation skills and are well prepared for study at higher levels. Adult learners achieve their goals well and improve their social mobility.

Apprentices benefit greatly from the high-quality tailored training that staff and employers work in close partnership to provide, which often goes beyond the qualification requirements. Staff include training in kitchen fitting so that level 2 carpentry apprentices can use the skills they learn at work. Staff and employers arrange for aviation apprentices to train on replica jet engines and hydraulic training systems to hone their engineering skills. Specialist engineers working for international aviation companies mentor apprentices during their training. Nearly all apprentices move on to employment, further training or are promoted.

Learners with high needs study ambitious programmes of learning that are very closely aligned with their individual needs and aspirations. Their transition from school to college is without disruption because of the preparation, care and attention staff pay to their needs. They learn the social skills they need for employment through high-quality work experience, such as in restaurants and garden centres. They contribute positively to the lives of others when they raise money for charities. They work purposefully, respectfully and with increasing independence in lessons. Learners with high needs fulfil the high expectations staff set for them and are well prepared for their next steps.

Learners and apprentices enjoy a wide range of varied activities beyond their qualification, which enhances their learning. Art and design students make reusable sanitary products for those affected by war and displacement. Learners in catering

visit world-class hotels and restaurants and compete in prestigious competitions. Engineering apprentices take part in charity events that support people with disabilities to fly aircraft. Learners and apprentices gain valuable experiences and learn how to contribute to their communities.

Learners and apprentices benefit highly from a rich and well-considered personal development programme that supports them in their lives and future careers. They learn about the values important for life in modern Britain. They are equipped with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their health and well-being, and they know what constitutes a healthy relationship. Learners feel safe at college and at work, and they know how to report concerns.

### **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the skills needs of the region. They use their close relationships with, for example, Hampshire County Council, the Chamber of Commerce and large employers to gather valuable insights into current and future workforce needs, including for learners with special educational needs. They work closely with other education providers to make sure the courses they offer fit in well with other education and training in the region. Leaders and managers have developed a well-considered curriculum offer to respond to the needs of the region.

Leaders and managers involve employers and other stakeholders very effectively in the design and teaching of curriculums. In construction, large employers support the college with materials and training in the installation and use of renewable technologies for the Half House construction site in Aldershot. In engineering, large employers provide advanced equipment, such as an aircraft for learners and apprentices to train on, along with training for staff in current aviation engineering techniques. In high needs learning, managers collaborate with Surrey Choices to help learners improve their social and customer service skills in preparation for their work placements. Learners and apprentices learn the skills they need for employment.

Leaders and managers stay up to date with changes in their industries and adapt the training they provide to learners accordingly. In catering, managers include pastry skills in the curriculum in response to the needs of chefs, for example from Heckfield Place, the Royal Military Academy and The Savoy. In graphic design, staff teach learners to use specialist design software in response to feedback from industry partners. Learners and apprentices develop industry standard skills.

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

In adult learning programmes, the education and training leaders and staff provide is highly effective. The courses they offer match closely what learners need and

employers want. Managers and staff collaborate well with local employers to design training for adults that helps them in their jobs and improves their chances of securing meaningful work. Teachers expertly structure learning and skilfully teach learners so that they are confident to use and apply their underpinning knowledge. Adult learners achieve the qualifications they need for university or to study at the next level. They deepen the knowledge they need for the jobs they have or aspire to.

In apprenticeships, staff use their strong relationships with employers to carefully plan and review apprentices' learning throughout their training. Apprentices' training in college and at work is intertwined well and highly relevant to their jobs. For example, apprentices in engineering use their knowledge of station identification systems to accurately locate faults in aircraft. Apprentices in carpentry use the joinery skills they learn to fit kitchens and renovate staircases. Across the different apprenticeships, apprentices learn the underpinning knowledge they need for their jobs, they achieve well and many secure distinction grades.

Highly qualified and committed staff in provision for learners with high needs use their expertise very effectively to help learners thrive in their studies. They regularly update their knowledge and skills to help learners succeed in their education. They teach learners to use assistive technologies, such as adapted keyboards and screens, speech-to-text software and reading pens, so they can fully participate in learning and life. Specialist therapists help learners take part in activities, provide valuable contributions when staff set targets for learners and advise staff on strategies to use to develop learners' understanding of concepts such as multiplication. Learners with high needs make very good progress.

In education programmes for young people, leaders and staff have high expectations for learners' education and achievement. They provide well-planned programmes of learning so that learners develop their knowledge and technical skills well. In T-level education and early years, teachers link concepts such as Turner's social identity theory and design activities that encourage children's language development for learners to apply on their work placements. Learners studying AS-level courses do not acquire the knowledge they need to pass their assessments and achieve their A levels. Most learners acquire new knowledge and skills and achieve their qualifications well.

Teaching is effective for young people and highly effective for adult learners, apprentices and learners with high needs. Teachers use their expert knowledge skilfully to design relevant and interesting teaching activities. They explain concepts clearly and demonstrate practical skills well. In T-level education and early years, teachers use simulated nursery and play areas so learners can practise the skills to look after young children. Teachers in advanced manufacturing engineering demonstrate how to use welding equipment and modern lathes so apprentices know how to use them skilfully and safely at work. Learners and apprentices enjoy their lessons and develop useful new knowledge and skills.

Teachers use assessment effectively in order to check what learners and apprentices know and help them to improve. In carpentry, teachers use effective questioning to test apprentices' knowledge of different skirting and where these should be used. In fashion, learners expertly evaluate one another's plans for final projects and give constructive feedback to improve. In provision for learners with high needs, staff use assessment very effectively in order to set challenging targets that learners understand. They make rapid progress against these targets. Teachers of A-level courses do not ensure learners are clear on what they need to do to improve their grade and pass their final assessment. Most learners and apprentices remember more and improve their knowledge and skills.

Leaders and staff provide learners and apprentices with an extensive range of high-quality advice and guidance about their careers and next steps. Adults studying access to allied health professions learn how to align their answers to the values of the NHS in online interviews. Apprentices considering self-employment complete a business start-up course. Young learners and learners with high needs complete high-quality work experience. For example, art and design fashion students work backstage at London Fashion Week events. Learners and apprentices are well informed to make good choices about their next steps.

Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the college well. They use their processes effectively in order to maintain and improve the quality of adult learning, apprenticeships and high needs provision. The actions of leaders and managers have not ensured that learners studying education programmes for young people experience consistently high-quality education. Consequently, a small but significant proportion of learners do not achieve well enough.

Leaders benefit from highly skilled and experienced governors, who share their expertise very well. They work in an effective partnership to improve the college and deal with difficulties. This includes managing exceptionally well the significant logistical challenges caused by RAAC which led to the sudden closure of many areas of the college. Leaders and governors accessed alternative premises swiftly so that learners and apprentices could continue with their education and training. Although many of the activities previously available for learners to take part in beyond the curriculum have been curtailed, leaders and governors have made sure learners and apprentices continue to have valuable opportunities to develop their interests and talents.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Improve teaching and assessment in AS- and A-level courses so learners acquire the knowledge they need and know how to achieve the grades they are capable of.

- Improve the quality of education for young people so they receive consistently high-quality teaching.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130689
<b>Address</b>	Boundary Road Farnborough Hampshire GU14 6SB
<b>Contact number</b>	01252 407 008
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.farn-ct.ac.uk">www.farn-ct.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Virginia Barrett
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	10 to 13 May 2022
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	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

Mark Hillman, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Roland White	His Majesty's Inspector
Jo-Ann Henderson	His Majesty's Inspector
David Baber	Ofsted Inspector
Nicki Adams	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Addis	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Griffin	Ofsted Inspector
Lucy Poynter	Ofsted Inspector
Marta Gajewska-Kopczyk	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Potterton	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Beale	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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