



Farleigh Further Education College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
April 2006

Provider reference
50021

Contents

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	5
Curriculum areas	5
<hr/>	
Overall judgement	6
Main findings	8
Curriculum area inspections	12

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Farleigh Further Education College
Type of college:	Independent specialist college
Principal:	Jonathan Hammond
Address of college:	105 Bath Road, Old Town, Swindon SN1 4AX
Telephone number:	01793 484031
Fax number:	01793 481205
Unique reference number:	50021
Name of lead inspector:	Kath Smith LMI
Dates of inspection:	6-9 February 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Farleigh Further Education College Swindon (FFECS) is an independent specialist college, privately owned by the Priory Healthcare Group, for students aged 16 to 25. This is a new college opened in September 2004 and a sister organisation to Farleigh Further Education College Frome. There are 22 students in total; 14 are resident and eight attend on a daily basis. Of the residents, 12 are male and two are female. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds 20 learners and a further two are jointly funded by Social Services and ELWa. There are two learners from minority ethnic groups. The college works in partnership with three general further education (FE) colleges.
2. All students at FFECS have a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome. Before joining the college they will have previously attended special schools, received significant support in mainstream schools or experienced a breakdown of their placement at a mainstream school or general FE college. All academic and vocational teaching is arranged through partnership agreements with general FE colleges. These partnerships enable students to access a broad range of academic and vocational courses. Students take courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level, depending on their level of abilities and qualifications. Learning support at these colleges is provided by FFECS staff. Staff and students operate from a base room on a general FE college campus. Residential accommodation for up to fifteen learners is situated within a short distance. The college's mission is to 'enable students to achieve their learning goals, whilst helping them grow as individuals, gaining confidence in their abilities and accepting the complexities of Asperger's Syndrome'.

Scope of the inspection

3. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management
 - specialist provision in: vocational studies

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: grade 3
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3

Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Curriculum areas

Vocational studies	Satisfactory: grade 3
--------------------	-----------------------

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

4. This is a satisfactory college. Success rates in a range of national awards on vocational and academic courses are good and all learners make gains in communication, personal and social skills. There are no differences between achievements of different groups. Achievements in literacy and numeracy are insufficiently recognised and there are limited opportunities for day students to learn independent living skills.
5. Teaching is mostly satisfactory or better. Teachers use different approaches and strategies effectively to meet the individual needs of learners. Assessment and the recording and sharing of progress across all areas of the learners' programmes are insufficiently rigorous.
6. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Learners benefit from the wide range of programmes, extended curriculum activities, and subject areas on offer from foundation to advanced level courses. Day students have less opportunity to develop independent living skills and to participate in the leisure and enrichment activities on offer. Literacy and numeracy skills provision is underdeveloped.
7. Therapeutic support provided to learners is good and individual support is satisfactory overall. Behaviour plans are comprehensive and provide appropriate strategies for staff to support learners in the management of inappropriate behaviours. Transition arrangements are not in place early enough for learners on leaving the college. Comprehensive procedures are in place and implemented effectively to promote the safety and well-being of learners.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers provide a clear direction focused on the needs of learners. Staff feel well supported and have good access to well planned and effective training and development opportunities. Self-assessment is accurate and actions are underway to improve provision. Quality assurance and monitoring systems are mostly informal and unsystematically applied. The college is not fully compliant with equalities legislation.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

9. The college demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. This is the college's first inspection and so the judgement about its capacity to improve is based upon their progress over the past year. The self-assessment report is accurate and identifies strengths and areas for improvement broadly in line with those found by inspectors. The three year development plan is effectively used as a working document and most of the actions identified are underway. The

recently established senior management team has put into operation new systems to improve quality and to monitor provision. These are underdeveloped and as yet have not had an impact on the quality of provision. Although these are new initiatives the leaders and managers are well supported by The Priory Healthcare Group and the staff team. All are fully committed to improving provision for learners. The very successful working relationships firmly established with partner general FE colleges, greatly assist in the college's further progress and development.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- success rates on vocational and academic courses
- effective behaviour management
- the extensive range of courses and activities
- successful partnerships with partner colleges
- good therapeutic support

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the development of literacy and numeracy skills
- the sharing of ILPs with all staff
- the assessment and recording of learners' progress
- the quality improvement and monitoring systems
- compliance with the Special Educational Needs Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RR(A)A).

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

10. Learners' achievements are satisfactory overall and there are no differences between different groups of learners. Learners enjoy their work and gain confidence and self-esteem. The college's self-assessment report accurately identifies success rates on a range of national awards and qualifications as a strength. Standards of work are in line with course requirements and in some cases are very good. Fifteen of the sixteen learners achieved the required standard on academic and vocational courses during their first year. Most learners successfully develop independence skills. Effective systems have been recently implemented which successfully identify learner progress. Residential learners make satisfactory improvements in independence skills. They learn domestic skills which include cooking and shopping for themselves, and how to manage their own finances. Day learners have limited opportunities to develop these skills.
11. Learners make satisfactory progress in social and communication skills. Specific learning objectives are set for learners within behaviour plans to achieve and most show improvements in coping and dealing with their anxieties. They learn the skills to cope within different groups of learners across college provision and to interact appropriately. Through successful integration within general FE courses they also learn the social and academic skills needed to continue their education after leaving Farleigh. Work related skills are effectively developed through vocational courses, and work placements where appropriate. Health and safety issues are given due attention and satisfactory risk assessments are in place for group activities and for individuals as needed.
12. Although social and communication skills are being satisfactorily developed, progress is not sufficiently recorded or used to provide an overall picture of student achievements. There is no overarching Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to clearly identify objectives for learners across all areas of their learning programmes. Literacy and numeracy skills development is unsatisfactory and there is little information gathered and used to record progress in this specific area.
13. The retention rate of 71%, for 2004-2005 is particularly low for this type of provision. However, retention has improved recently with only one learner having left since September 2005. Whilst learners are generally punctual for lessons, their attendance was low during the week of inspection due to an unprecedented bout of sickness. Although attendance rates have improved significantly in relation to individual learners, overall attendance rates are insufficiently monitored or analysed to bring about improvements.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

14. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Learners learn to work independently with appropriate levels of support. Teachers and FFECS support staff manage learners' behaviour well. Teachers use their knowledge of Asperger's Syndrome to plan effectively, and use appropriate approaches and strategies to maximise learning. Learning is particularly good within real working environments, such as the college coffee shop, where social and communication skills are developed successfully. There were good examples observed where ICT, including interactive whiteboards and computers, was used successfully within lessons to reinforce learning. In less well planned lessons, teachers did not take account of the difficulties experienced by individuals in understanding the tasks they had to complete. In one lesson it was noticed that this had caused one learner much confusion and anxiety. There are also missed opportunities to integrate literacy and numeracy skill development within lessons.
15. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that there are insufficient systems in place to identify where actions need to be made to improve teaching and learning. Some information is shared by partner colleges and there are plans to develop more rigorous lesson observation schemes. Although assessment processes have improved, these are not used effectively enough to identify individual learning objectives to share with college lecturers, or FFECS trainers, for them to incorporate into lesson planning.
16. There is good communication between the college and parents of residential learners. Communication systems are not yet fully in place to liaise successfully with parents of day learners.
17. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory overall but the college does not fully comply with equalities legislation. It responds well to meeting the needs and interests of learners with Asperger's Syndrome. There is an extensive range of curriculum opportunities. Courses are available in four local colleges from foundation, through to intermediate and advanced. Farleigh learners follow a wide variety of vocational and academic programmes chosen to meet their abilities and needs. There is a rich programme of evening and weekend activities. Residential learners follow individual programmes every evening and at weekends. These include a good choice of sports and fitness activities, music, games and outings. Day learners are also offered an evening programme based at the learning centre on two evenings per week, and join the residential learners for one day every fortnight at weekends. Where appropriate, learners are provided with work experience through their vocational programmes. There are good examples where individual students gain valuable work placements arranged by FFECS managers. However, this area of provision is still in need of further development.

18. Literacy and numeracy provision has improved recently but significant areas for development remain. A well qualified and experienced co-ordinator conducts initial assessments using a variety of well chosen assessment tools. There is no policy or development plan for literacy, language and numeracy support. The skills of some staff are not adequate to support the development of learners' skills.
19. The college provides satisfactory guidance and support to learners. Comprehensive procedures are in place to ensure the safety and welfare of learners. Therapeutic support is good. Learners benefit from individual and group therapies in speech and language, art therapy and counselling. The speech and language therapist also works with staff to help them develop learners' communication skills. Residential staff help learners develop their domestic skills effectively and are beginning to record progress systematically.
20. Support from learning support staff is satisfactory overall and some is good. The self-assessment report accurately identifies individual support given to learners as strength. Staff are skilled at helping learners to use appropriate strategies to manage aspects of their Asperger's Syndrome. Much personal support is helpful and productive. However, not all staff have the necessary literacy or study skills to support learners effectively in the classroom. A few staff are too directive during lessons. Support is not always recorded adequately.
21. Transition arrangements are insufficiently developed. Relationships with the college's link Connexions adviser have been helpful in progressing a few learners on to the next stage in their lives but transition activities are not structured into the college's annual plan. Reviews of learners' progress on their current programmes of study do not take place early enough to maximise their chances of success at the next stage.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

22. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers set a clear direction for the development of this recently established college. The self-assessment process is comprehensive, rigorous and highlights areas for improvements broadly in line with those identified by inspectors. The three year development plan (2005-08) is detailed and well structured with clear objectives and performance indicators identified, actions required and timescales specified. The current principal, who has been in post since April 2005, members of the senior management team and representatives from the Priory Healthcare Group have all worked hard to improve the provision. Staff value the open style of management and feel more involved in decision making. Day to day operational management and communication are good. Links with community and welfare groups and partner colleges are very good and developing. The college works effectively with general FE colleges on four different sites; agreements are well established, regular meetings are held and any problems are quickly and effectively managed by FFECS. Overall the

quality improvement systems are insufficiently established and outcomes are yet to be properly evaluated. A new management information system has recently been installed but is yet to produce sufficient data for quality improvement purposes.

23. Staff work successfully as a team to meet the needs of learners. They feel well supported and receive regular supervision. Staff have varied ways of accessing staff development and training. Staff induction is comprehensive and includes training in child protection. Staff have access to on-line facilities to improve skills and expertise including issues in relation to equal opportunities. The self-assessment report identifies that staff do not have sufficient qualifications or experience in aspects of training and education. Plans are now in place to address this weakness. A staff appraisal system has recently been introduced for some staff but appraisal meetings have not yet been carried out and the system is not fully embedded.
24. Resources are good within general FE colleges and satisfactory within the FFEC learning support centre. Learners access all partner college amenities including refectories, libraries, ICT suites, and student services. The college's own learning resource centre acts as a useful base for learners where they can find staff at any time and obtain additional support for literacy and numeracy, study skills and therapy. There are insufficient resources available to day learners to practice independence skills.
25. The college is not fully compliant with equalities legislation. The equal opportunities policy does not include reference to the Special Educational Needs Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 or the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RR(A)A). No action plans are in place and not all staff have received training to meet statutory requirements. The college effectively promotes issues in relation to Asperger's Syndrome. Issues of discrimination are tackled effectively where they are identified and equality and diversity issues are satisfactorily integrated into the learners' programmes.
26. Although there is no governing body, the Priory Healthcare Group provides good support to the college and is actively involved in the development of systems to improve the quality of provision. Good monitoring of the LSC individual learner schedules ensures learners obtain the programme and level of support specified within the contracts. Financial management is sound and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Curriculum area inspections

Vocational Studies

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

27. The college offers a wide range of vocational courses for all learners through its four partner general FE colleges; courses currently being offered range from foundation to advanced level. There is a variety of subjects studied across vocational and academic courses across all levels, including hospitality and catering, art and design, ICT, countryside and management, work skills, music, sport and outdoor education, electronics, maths, English, science, and religious studies. Learners also have study periods and discrete literacy and numeracy lessons which take place within FF ECS's own learning support centre, which is located within the grounds of one of its partner general FE colleges.

STRENGTHS

- good vocational and academic achievements
- good behaviour management
- wide range of vocational opportunities for learners

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- literacy and numeracy skills development
- the sharing of information in relation to individual learners' needs
- quality improvement systems for teaching and learning

Achievements and standards

28. Achievements and standards are good. Learners achieve a wide variety of vocational and academic qualifications. Standards of student work are in line with course requirements and in some cases are very good. One learner has been awarded 'Student of the Year' in catering, another received a distinction in GNVQ art and design and another received a merit in BTEC countryside management. The recording and recognition of literacy and numeracy skills development within vocational programmes is underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

29. Teaching on academic and vocational programmes is good overall. The majority of lessons observed were satisfactory or better and a significant proportion was good. Teachers have high levels of expertise in their subject areas. They have adapted their approaches based on a thorough understanding of Asperger's Syndrome and have come to know the learners'

- needs well. They are effective in organising and providing good support to learners during lessons. Teaching and learning is less effective within discrete literacy and numeracy lessons provided to support learners in their course work. Opportunities are missed to develop these skills within college courses.
30. Initial assessment is not sufficiently developed to successfully identify individual learning targets in literacy and numeracy skills related to the courses and subjects being taken. Teachers do not have sufficient information about individual learner's needs in relation to their behaviour or their individual learning objectives at the start of the course. Student progress in terms of the development of social, personal or communication skills are therefore insufficiently tracked or monitored to provide an overall picture of learners' achievements.
31. There is a wide range of vocational opportunities for learners. Teachers have expertise in their own vocational area and recent experience in the workplace. Pre-placement information enables learners to be placed on appropriate programmes to meet their needs and preferences and be suitably challenged. Work experience is a satisfactory component of programmes. Learners develop practical skills in realistic workplace settings. Good health and safety practices are well established in lessons and safe methods of working are well promoted in the workplace.
32. Learner support is satisfactory and staff have developed good relationships with learners. There is good identification of learner needs and strategies to support their social and personal care in the learning environment. In some cases support staff do not have the skills to support learners in the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Also the written feedback recorded by support staff in relation to individual progress on their courses is not always sufficient or informative.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management of vocational programmes are satisfactory. Partnership agreements with local colleges and informal communications are good. Communications between staff are good. Quality improvement systems for observing teaching and learning are underdeveloped. Literacy and numeracy are not effectively planned or embedded in the curriculum. The monitoring and recording of progress and achievements are not sufficiently rigorous. Standards of accommodation and resources are good. The self-assessment report is accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Equal opportunities are satisfactorily promoted within lessons.