

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Farleigh FE College Frome
Date of visit: 8 March 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

Achievement and standards

At the last annual assessment visit (AAV), it was too early to judge the impact of the new systems established to strengthen the tracking of learner progress. A year on, how effectively has the college developed recognising and recording of achievement (RARPA) to track and monitor student progress and non-accredited achievement?

- The college has made good progress in strengthening the tracking of learner progress and non-accredited achievement.
- All aspects of the assessment process have been revised and the new processes are more effective in producing meaningful targets that can be tracked and monitored by both Farleigh staff and tutors from partner colleges.
- A new electronic learner gateway, accessible to all staff, has been developed to collect and store all learner information, including initial assessment, individual learning plans and reviews. The learner gateway is being used effectively to monitor record and update learner progress against targets on their individual learning plans (ILPs) and to produce learner reports. This gateway is also proving effective in ensuring that care and teaching staff are fully informed of learner targets and progress. However, the ILPs from Farleigh College and the learners' partner college are not fully integrated at the present time. Joint target setting has commenced and the college has identified this as an area for further development.
- An electronic journal is completed by all learners, to record their account of the progress made during their time at the college. This

journal is increasingly being used to capture learners' non-accredited achievement.

Quality of education and training

How effectively is the college moving forward the Every Child Matters agenda?

- Good progress has been made in promoting the five themes to ensure every child matters, which is now formally coordinated by the head of department for care. A recent well constructed promotional DVD, produced by drama students with their teacher, highlights the relevance of every child matters to parents and prospective students.
- The promotion of healthy lifestyles is very good. Learners have access to free fruit and drinking water. The introduction of a breakfast club in 2006 has proved very successful in encouraging learners to eat in the morning, recognising both the importance in helping learners study more effectively and in taking any required medication with food. More informal themed breakfast weekends, for example a 'French breakfast', are also now held every two weeks. Skilled-based cooking has also been introduced from September 2006 to raise learners' awareness of cooking healthily. Promotion of physical exercise has led to a significant increase in learners using the gym.
- Steps have been taken to increase learners' opportunities to make a positive contribution to the college and community. Learners continue to have a voice through the student council and issues raised by learners, such as the variety of food and general storage, are responded to quickly by the college. Participation in extra curricular events is encouraged and the numbers of learners getting involved, particularly in physical activities, has increased. This curriculum also responds to the growing number of female learners, for example the college football team for the first time have a female referee. There has been an increased focus for social activities and work experience to be based locally where possible, so learners can gain the confidence and transferable skills that can be eventually used further a field.
- The five themes now feature more predominantly within the college's self-assessment report although currently no clear judgments have been made about the quality of each theme. The self-assessment

report does not always sufficiently focus on or reflect the impact of the work being undertaken in this area.

At the last inspection the college's transition programme was judged to be good. The most recent self-assessment report states this remains a strength. How effectively has the college continued to build on this aspect of their work?

- Transition planning remains good.
- Planning starts from the beginning of the learners programme and is a key theme throughout their time at the college. Learners' long term goals are discussed at the initial interview and are reviewed throughout the learner's programme, to ensure that they are on the appropriate course and that their goals are realistic and achievable. The partner college is now closely involved with these discussions, in particular with regard to choice of course. The learner journal is used effectively to plan, integrate and develop transition planning and to review and reflect on employment and learning opportunities.
- Transition planning is comprehensive and takes into account all aspects of the learner's future needs to ensure the learner leaves with a complete package that includes accommodation, level of support and employment. Where possible learners who are going to live independently locally are supported to move into this accommodation prior to leaving college.
- The college has developed very good links with a range of partners to support the transition process. For example it works closely with local Job Centres and Connexions services to support learners to carry-out job search activities in a real environment and to access relevant information about supported living.
- Learners who are planning to progress to university are given good advice, information and support to make appropriate choices. They are encouraged early in their programme to think about their personal statements. Outside speakers are invited to the college to talk to learners about university choice and application. Recently the college has been working with Prospects, a branch of the National Autistic Society to support learners in their progression planning. In particular disabled students assessments (DSA) now take place at the college

and are completed by staff from Prospects who have already talked to learners about university applications.

Leadership and management

How is the college working with local partner colleges to improve aspects of provision, for example, in the monitoring arrangements of learners' work and in ensuring clearer advice and guidance for entry onto some courses?

- The college is making good progress in working with the local partner colleges and other providers to monitor learner progress and to improve learner opportunities.
- Partner college staff are now involved in the learner's second interview to ensure that the learner is on the appropriate course and that the college is fully aware of all aspects of the learner's support needs. Regular, planned meetings take place between the head of learning and the heads of learning support at the partner colleges. College staff are now more fully involved in contributing to learner reviews and sharing of reports is now routine. Learning support workers are now receiving clear details of the structure and content of the lessons they are supporting. The learner gateway is ensuring that college staff have better and more comprehensive information about learner targets and progress and are therefore better able to individualise learner programmes. Plans are in place to use the learner gateway to provide information on learner assignment briefs and deadlines.
- The college continues to deliver training to the partner colleges on autistic spectrum, the impact on individuals and the particular needs that a person on the autistic spectrum may have. It has introduced useful communication systems to advise partner college tutors of changes in learning support workers and their roles.
- Partnership working has been extended. The college works closely with the local community to develop a range of work-related learning opportunities and to increase learner choice. In particular it has been responsive to learner requests and feedback. For example, learners now have the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme through local youth service provision.

- Currently the college does not receive comprehensive information on the progress and achievements of all learners, for example value added and achievement of high grades.

How has the college adapted its self-assessment report to drive forward further improvement?

- The self-assessment report has much improved since the last AAV. The self-assessment process is seen as ongoing and the subsequent report is generally used well by managers as a tool to drive quality improvement.
- The report is much more evaluative than its predecessor and provides clearer sources of evidence. However, some areas for improvement lack a sharp focus - making planning specific improvements too generic in places. In addition, some evidence outlined in the self assessment does not fully support all the judgments made, nor does it sufficiently capture the work that the college has undertaken. For example, there is little reference to trends over time and success rates within achievements and standards, little evidence of impact within every child matters themes and no reference to governance or curriculum management within leadership and management.
- There is a clear review process which links to the previous self assessment and development plan outcomes to the most recent reviews of performance.

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- The principal and senior managers continue to be committed to improve the quality of provision and there is a strong focus on meeting the needs and interests of the learners. Learner numbers have increased by around 30% this academic year and four additional well resourced residential houses have been purchased to cater for this expansion.