



The Sixth Form College Farnborough



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
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and care

Inspection report

| | | |
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| Audience | Published April 2007 | Provider reference 130703 |
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Basic information about the college

Name of college: The Sixth Form College Farnborough

Type of college: Sixth Form College

Principal: Dr John Guy

Address of college: Prospect Avenue, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 8JX

Telephone number: 01252 688200

Fax number: 01252 688206

Chair of governors: Mr William Bagnall

Unique reference number: 108394

Name of lead inspector: Janet Mercer HMI

Dates of inspection: 1st March 2007

Background of the organisation

The Sixth Form College Farnborough serves primarily the needs of full-time 16- 19 year old students in the travel to study area centred on Farnborough. The college has sought to retain and build upon its reputation as a centre of sixth form studies and has had the same single corporate objective since 1996: *improving students' achievements*.

In July 2002, the college was named as one of the first four Beacon colleges in the country. The college has won three annual Beacon awards in recent years: for its outstanding work in the teaching of physics in 2003, for chemistry in 2001 and for mathematics in 1999.

Numbers of full-time students have increased from 1,180 in 1992 to 2,908 in 2006. Almost all students are 16 to 19 year olds. The college offers courses in eleven of the fifteen subject sector areas, with the largest provision being in science and maths, arts and media and languages and culture.

The local area has high levels of employment with a significant proportion of hi-tech industry related to the aerospace and defence industries. A high proportion of 16 year olds in the area continue in education. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups in the college is 7%, which is higher than in the local area.

Scope of the inspection

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 students' 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

Summary of grades awarded

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Effectiveness of provision | Outstanding : grade 1 |
| Capacity to improve | Outstanding : grade 1 |
| Achievements and standards | Outstanding : grade 1 |
| Quality of provision | Outstanding : grade 1 |
| Leadership and management | Outstanding : grade 1 |

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.

Overall judgement

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding: grade 1

The college is outstanding in all aspects of its provision. Managers and teachers are wholly committed to the college's objective of improving students' achievements. There is a very strong focus on developing the full potential of every individual, and enabling students to achieve at every level. The college has initiated some very innovative work in supporting students' personal growth and development and enabling them to understand the many different ways they can learn. Students develop a strong sense of maturity and responsibility, and the ability to work independently. The culture of high expectations, combined with highly effective teaching and excellent support, enables students to achieve very well.

The excellent achievements reported at the last inspection have improved further. Students on the vast majority of courses make very good progress relative to their starting points. Overall success, retention and pass rates at all levels are well above the average for similar colleges.

Students value highly the range of opportunities available to them and the very high levels of academic and personal support they receive. Excellent teaching encourages students to become independent learners and to enjoy learning beyond the requirements of their examinations. The college's approach to self assessment is rigorous, self-critical and effectively secures continuing improvement, even where standards are already very high.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. Outstanding leadership and management have created a culture that enables students to achieve excellent standards in almost every subject. The college has further improved high success rates year on year because it constantly seeks to improve the achievement of each individual student by focussing on ways to improve already outstanding levels of teaching. The few weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been eliminated. Senior managers set very high standards which all staff are committed to achieve.

Achievements and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

Students' achievements are outstanding. Success rates on long courses at all levels are significantly above average, and have risen each year since the last inspection. Success rates on GCE AS and A-level courses and vocational courses at level 3 are very high. Students make very good or excellent progress in the majority of subjects, and value-added measures place the college in the top 10% of colleges nationally. The college has identified a very small number of courses where students have not

made as much progress as expected. Rigorous analysis and monitoring of these courses has proved effective in improving results.

On GCSE courses A*-C pass rates are very high in English and maths, and usually at or above average in other subjects. Success rates on level 2 vocational courses are also well above average. Students have opportunities to gain additional qualifications relevant to their career aspirations. For example, a number of students take nursing related courses and teaching assistant NVOs.

Students produce very high standards of work and develop very good academic skills. Recent work on extended inter-disciplinary projects demonstrated high level research and investigation skills, combined with excellent writing skills.

Rates of progression to higher education, employment or training are very high.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

Teaching is highly effective in enabling students to achieve excellent results and high standards of work. Students speak very highly of the quality of teaching in most lessons. Their feedback through the course forum for each subject contributes to continuing improvement. A recent Ofsted survey visit to the college indicated a high proportion of very good and outstanding lessons in science subjects.

The college has successfully implemented a teaching for learning strategy (T4L), which focuses on how students learn and how each individual can achieve their best. Teachers are encouraged to engage in research on particular aspects of teaching and learning of interest to them and their findings are shared throughout the college. There is an on-going and active debate and discussion around teaching and learning in the college, which fosters an atmosphere where teachers feel able to experiment and innovate, without fear of failure. Teachers effectively support students' personal development and challenge them to extend the ways in which they learn.

Students can choose from an exceptionally broad curriculum. An extensive range of well attended enrichment opportunities include sport, the arts, and a wide variety of overseas visits. A substantial number of students complete the world challenge annually. Responsive community projects include work with special schools and providing student mentors for school children. Students receive a written transcript of all their enrichment activities.

The college works extensively with local and regional stakeholders. An innovative scheme using vocational mentors from a diverse range of employers creatively develops students' understanding of their chosen professions. Other students benefit from well coordinated and relevant work experience using well designed learning logs to record their vocational and personal skills development. Although the student apprenticeship programme can no longer be accredited, well planned long-term placements continue to improve these students' employability.

Support for students is outstanding. Rigorous evaluation of outcomes from the wide range of support clearly demonstrates its impact on rising success and retention rates. Thorough diagnostic screening informs support arrangements which are

regularly reviewed to meet changing needs. Support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is planned early and integrated into their programme. Second year students provide mutually beneficial peer mentoring to younger students in specialist subject workshops.

Specialist personal tutors promote students' personal and academic development. Regular individual reviews measure academic progress and also set clear targets against criteria to develop maturity and independence. Students value this and report increased confidence and self reliance. In response to a thorough audit of Every Child Matters, one personal tutor has been appointed to support looked after children. The tutorial programme is flexibly adapted to meet different needs. Career guidance is readily available in a variety of settings and materials. Good links to universities foster creative joint working. The successful annual 'Moving On Day' is attended by a wide range of organisations to showcase progression opportunities. An employment agency develops interview and CV skills and arranges work tasters for those students undecided on their career options.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

Leadership and management continue to be outstanding. Managers and teachers share a common purpose and put students' achievements at the heart of everything the college does. As a result, students' achievements are outstanding. The college constantly strives to improve and is not afraid to use innovative approaches to curriculum design and teaching and learning to do so. Challenging targets are set and are invariably met. Monitoring of performance by the college is highly effective. Self assessment is rigorous, self critical and focuses clearly on the very small number of areas where there is some underperformance. It is used very effectively to bring about quality improvement. Governors monitor all aspects of the college's performance rigorously. The college fully complies with current legislation on child protection and equal opportunities. Financial management is excellent and the college provides outstanding value for money.

Students' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age.

2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|
| | | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| 1 Long | 03/04 | 166 | 81.3 | 66.4 | 15.0 | | | | |
| | 04/05 | 188 | 76.1 | 63.3 | 12.8 | | | | |
| | 05/06 | 198 | 90 | | | | | | |
| GNVQs and precursors | 03/04 | | | | | | | | |
| | 04/05 | | | | | | | | |
| | 05/06 | | | | | | | | |
| NVQs | 03/04 | | | | | | | | |
| | 04/05 | | | | | | | | |
| | 05/06 | | | | | | | | |
| Other | 03/04 | 166 | 81.3 | 66.4 | 15.0 | | | | |
| | 04/05 | 188 | 76.1 | 63.3 | 12.8 | | | | |
| | 05/06 | 198 | 90 | | | | | | |

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age.

2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|------|
| | | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| 2 Long | 03/04 | 553 | 86.1 | 74.0 | 12.1 | | | | |
| | 04/05 | 508 | 87.6 | 73.1 | 14.5 | | | | |
| | 05/06 | 452 | 89 | | | | | | |
| GCSEs | 03/04 | 332 | 85.2 | 77.0 | 8.2 | | | | |
| | 04/05 | 327 | 89.0 | 77.8 | 11.1 | | | | |
| | 05/06 | 338 | 90 | | | | | | |
| GNVQs and precursors | 03/04 | 64 | 87.5 | 72.5 | 15.0 | | | | |
| | 04/05 | 57 | 82.5 | 74.3 | 8.1 | | | | |
| | 05/06 | 56 | 85 | | | | | | |
| NVQs | 03/04 | | | | | | | | |
| | 04/05 | | | | | | | | |
| | 05/06 | | | | | | | | |
| Other | 03/04 | 157 | 87.3 | 67.7 | 19.5 | | | | |
| | 04/05 | 124 | 86.3 | 61.8 | 24.5 | | | | |
| | 05/06 | 58 | 88 | | | | | | |

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age.
2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 16-18 | | | | 19+ | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| | | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | <i>Diff</i> | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | <i>Diff</i> |
| 3 Long | 03/04 | 9,871 | 87.3 | 80.4 | 6.9 | 23 | 77.8 | 57.0 | 20.8 |
| | 04/05 | 11,178 | 87.7 | 82.1 | 5.6 | 9 | 100.0 | 58.8 | 41.2 |
| | 05/06 | 12,320 | 91 | | | 8 | 75 | | |
| A/A2 Levels | 03/04 | 3,202 | 93.3 | 91.3 | 2.0 | 21 | 90.5 | 75.2 | 15.3 |
| | 04/05 | 3,665 | 94.5 | 91.9 | 2.6 | 7 | 100.0 | 75.9 | 24.1 |
| | 05/06 | 4,159 | 95 | | | 5 | 100 | | |
| AS Levels | 03/04 | 6,290 | 84.9 | 75.9 | 9.1 | 2 | 50.0 | 52.4 | -2.4 |
| | 04/05 | 7,050 | 84.5 | 77.7 | 8.8 | 2 | 100.0 | 53.6 | 46.4 |
| | 05/06 | 7,928 | 88 | | | 3 | 33 | | |
| GNVQs and precursors | 03/04 | 313 | 81.8 | 68.1 | 13.7 | | | | |
| | 04/05 | 440 | 83.6 | 74.5 | 9.1 | | | | |
| | 05/06 | 218 | 88 | | | | | | |
| NVQs | 03/04 | | | | | | | | |
| | 04/05 | | | | | | | | |
| | 05/06 | | | | | | | | |
| Other | 03/04 | 66 | 50.0 | 64.1 | -14.1 | | | | |
| | 04/05 | 23 | 73.9 | 71.6 | 2.3 | | | | |
| | 05/06 | 15 | 93 | | | | | | |