



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Farleigh Sixth Form College

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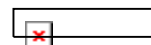
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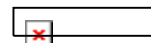
Basic information about the college



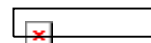
Name of college:	Farleigh Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Independent, specialist, residential
Principal:	Andrew Chiffers
Address of college:	North Parade Frome Somerset BA11 2AB
Telephone number:	01373 475470
Fax number:	01373 475473
Executive director of parent company:	Chai Patel
Reference number*:	131016
Name of reporting inspector:	Gillian Reay
Dates of inspection:	30 June - 3 July 2003

**charity or registered business number of the company running the college*

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



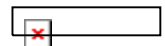
Farleigh Sixth Form College (FSFC) is a small, independent specialist college, privately owned by the Priory healthcare group, for students aged 16 to 25 based in Frome, Somerset. There are 23 students in total; 20 are resident and three attend on a daily basis. Of the residents, 16 are male and four are female. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds 15 students (14 residents, one day); the remainder are funded by local education authorities (LEAs). There are no students from minority ethnic groups. The college was established in September 2000, with 12 students who were funded by the LSC through a partnership with a general further education (GFE) college. In December 2001, the college was granted approval status by the LSC and received LSC-funded students to be managed by FSFC in 2002. Female students were admitted in September 2002. The college works in partnership with several GFE colleges depending on the needs of students. In the academic year 2002/03, students had attended three GFE colleges and undertaken vocational and academic qualifications. At the time of inspection, only one GFE college had FSFC students in attendance, as term had ended at the other two.

All students at FSFC have a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome. Before joining FSFC 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 GFE college. All academic

and vocational teaching is arranged through partnership agreements with GFE 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 FSFC staff. Staff and students operate from a base room on a GFE college campus.

FSFC has two residences, both in Frome. One accommodates 16 students, the other, a small estate house, accommodates four students. In September 2003, the college plans to open a new residence capable of accommodating 20 students in single rooms, in the style of a university hall of residence. Communication and independent living skills are taught in the residential accommodation by learning support workers (LSWs), the speech and language therapist, and the student counsellor. All students follow an independence programme which includes planning meals, shopping to a budget and cooking. They also learn about the full range of domestic skills, independent travel, personal care and accessing the community. Throughout both the academic and independence programmes, support is provided by LSWs on a one-to-one basis. The college's mission is to 'prepare students for life as fulfilled and self-reliant adults by teaching strategies to minimise the difficulties associated with Asperger's syndrome and to celebrate the gifts they have been given'.

How effective is the college?



Overall provision is unsatisfactory. Provision for vocational programmes at the GFE college is satisfactory, but literacy, numeracy, communication and independent living skills are unsatisfactory. Students make significant progress in the development of social and communication skills. The standard of students' work in the GFE colleges is satisfactory, but the quality of teaching and provision for independent living skills, literacy and numeracy at FSFC is unsatisfactory.

The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

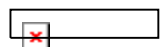
- very good personal support for students
- effective communication with parents
- good transition programme
- good work-experience programme
- development of students' confidence to study in a GFE college

- behaviour management.

What should be improved

- quality assurance procedures
- strategic planning
- promotion of equal opportunities
- residential accommodation
- accommodation in partner GFE college
- literacy and numeracy provision
- qualifications and training of staff
- target setting
- appropriateness of the independent living skills programme.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the

range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5)

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Literacy, numeracy, communication and independent living skills	Unsatisfactory. At the GFE college, the standards achieved by students in literacy, numeracy and key skills are satisfactory, but at FSFC, initial assessment for literacy and numeracy is not used to inform individual learning plans and there is limited support from LSWs. There are no links made between literacy and numeracy work in the GFE college and FSFC. The management and quality assurance of literacy and numeracy provision at FSFC are unsatisfactory. Initial assessment of independent living skills is good, but the setting and monitoring of targets and quality assurance are poor. Personal support for students is effective, but staff qualifications and training are inadequate.
Vocational programmes	Satisfactory. There are effective partnerships with GFE colleges, progression between courses is good and teaching is satisfactory. Work-based learning programmes and placements are good and there is good support from LSWs. Quality assurance is poor. Formal communication systems are ineffective; vocational, social and behavioural targets are insufficiently shared. Learning plans are inadequate and there is an insufficient match between lesson plans and students' needs.

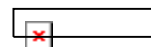
How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The mission is well understood by the staff and partners, but there is no strategic plan for FSFC. The majority of students achieve satisfactory standards on their courses in partner colleges. All teaching is done by staff in GFE colleges and is generally very good to satisfactory, however, a substantial amount of teaching is graded satisfactory. The residential accommodation is not satisfactory and does not meet the needs of the client group. The quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory, in particular the monitoring of the sub-contracted provision in partner colleges. There is insufficient observation of teaching. Staff development is not satisfactory. Financial management is satisfactory, but the monitoring of provision against the schedule and purchase orders is unsatisfactory, and the college does not provide value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

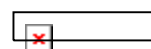
The college's response to social inclusion is satisfactory. The college attracts students nationally and they mix well with the local community and GFE partner colleges. The college is very good at promoting issues in relation to Asperger's syndrome, but there is no monitoring or reviewing of provision for minority ethnic groups. Staff have had little training in equal opportunities and there is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities in the students' programmes. Complaints procedures are clear and incidents are recorded. The college has been slow to respond to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). It has not yet completed an action plan in response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and has still to complete the audit of buildings and equipment in response to the SENDA.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is good overall. The use of LSWs, both in the college and the residences, is helpful for students. Personal support for students is very good and the LSWs are able to provide the support that is required to attend a GFE college. Behaviour management is good; a major focus at FSFC is helping the students to develop strategies to cope with anxiety. Each LSW has responsibility for one student, and reviews all aspects of progress weekly. The preparation for transition when leaving Farleigh is thorough and effective. There are very effective links with parents/carers. The induction programme is thorough and includes a series of overnight stays to familiarise students with the college. The student handbook is very helpful for students, and includes reference to the complaints procedures and the type of behaviour expected from students. Careers guidance is thorough, Connexions staff are closely involved, working in the students' locality and within GFE colleges. The level of specialist therapeutic support has not matched the requirements set out in the students' schedule and purchase order. The college has recently piloted some group projects involving the speech and language therapist and a counsellor, and it has introduced art therapy. These initiatives have been very successful. Work experience is well planned. The arrangements for leisure time are satisfactory and include a combination of student choice and staff suggestions.

Students' views of the college



Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

What students like about the college

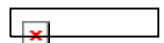
- help given by the college to grow in social confidence
- opportunities for well-supported work experience for coping with the pressures of the outside world
- generous support from key workers
- support from tutors in GFE colleges
- the adult approach from the FSFC staff

- the bonds built with other students
- support to make decisions about the future
- open access to personal guidance
- extensive after college activities
- the provision of a base room in one GFE college.

What they feel could be improved

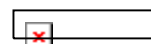
- too little one-to-one support from LSWs at the start of the year
- more free choice about modules in the programme
- work on practical skills
- lack of privacy in shared bedrooms
- overcrowding in communal rooms
- fewer changes to programmes.

Other information

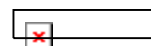


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once it is published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



Achievement and standards



1. The college opened in September 2000 and operated in partnership with a GFE. The first students to be funded by the LSC directly to FSFC were enrolled in September 2002. No previous inspection report is available against which to judge achievement and standards, and there are no data on LSC-funded students by which to judge trends over time. Currently 14 LSC-funded students are studying a range of courses from pre-entry to level 3. There is no difference between the performance of students aged 16 to 18 and that of those aged 19 to 25. The majority of students achieve their primary learning goal. Retention rates in 2002/03 are good. At the time of the inspection, one student had withdrawn during the academic year. Attendance rates during the inspection were high overall at 90%.

2. Attainment on courses in GFE colleges is mostly satisfactory, with the majority of students performing at a level appropriate for the course. On vocational courses, students achieve their learning goals and there is good progression from entry level and level 1 to higher level courses. In particular, students on level 2 courses are making good progress towards the achievement of the qualification, for example animal care courses. However, the development of literacy and numeracy skills is not sufficiently integrated into entry level courses. One student has progressed to higher education and his thorough preparation has enabled him to be successful academically and socially.

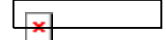
3. Most students make good progress in social and communication skills. Students develop strategies for dealing with social situations and taking part in conversations. For example, they are able to use more appropriate body language themselves, interpret non-verbal clues in other people and are able to interrupt politely and use eye contact to indicate interest. Students develop confidence in their ability to cope with new situations and to handle their anxieties better. They make satisfactory progress in travelling independently and in cooking, shopping and dealing with their own laundry.

4. In some instances, students are placed on GFE courses below their prior level of achievement. This leads to some students following inappropriate schedules for literacy and numeracy, and being insufficiently challenged in their coursework. Progress towards the achievement of key skills at levels 2 and 3 is good.

5. The standard of work is good on vocational courses. There is good achievement of practical skills. Students develop a high level of practical and vocational skills on work-based learning courses. Students in animal care have a good understanding of health, safety and hygiene requirements. In the GFE college, many students gain awards for their work, for example 'most improved student'; the 'work-based learning' Stourton Trophy; and, in 2003, the Bright Award for the best students on

an animal care course.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



6. The standard of teaching in the GFE college ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Communication skills are taught well. A 'dining and discussion' group at FSFC is carefully planned and well managed by qualified and experienced staff. Students make interesting observations and learn to listen and respond to each other. Most teaching of independent living skills is satisfactory. Students are interested and attentive when acquiring new skills, but some show resentment at being supervised while undertaking tasks which are well within their capacity. The use of targets for independent living skills is poorly managed and students' achievement is limited by inappropriate provision.

7. The majority of teaching on vocational courses is good. In the better lessons, teaching is well planned and uses a variety of teaching approaches, gives opportunities for students to make choices and develops independent learning skills. Teachers encourage participation in a range of activities. Students on vocational courses develop new skills and acquire knowledge of the subject and make progress in the development of personal and communication skills. For example, level 1 care students planned, delivered and evaluated a picnic for pupils with severe learning difficulties. The students demonstrated clear acquisition of new skills, confidence in expressing opinions and ideas, and learning was enjoyable and challenging. In level 2 animal care lessons, teaching based on team activities was effective, it paid careful attention to health and safety issues, valued students' choices and opinions, and recognised their knowledge. Follow-up work in a group tutorial demonstrated good opportunities for self-advocacy, time management, task completion and evaluation. The lesson provided good opportunities to develop self-esteem.

8. In less successful lessons, there is an over reliance on activities based on worksheets. Some literacy and numeracy lessons failed to challenge and motivate students and used inappropriate resources; students were frustrated and behaved badly. Although teachers in GFE colleges planned appropriate targets for their courses, students' individual learning plans are insufficiently used in planning differentiated activities for learners.

9. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and key skills is satisfactory in the GFE college. Teachers in the GFE college had an awareness of the needs of FSFC students, although some teachers felt that students were underachieving as a consequence of being placed on inappropriate courses. Most teachers in the GFE college had received recent and relevant training in national standards for literacy and numeracy. Specialist staff taught key skills which at level 2 were successfully integrated into students' courses.

10. The members of specialist staff responsible for therapeutic and behavioural interventions are well qualified and use their knowledge and experience appropriately. They give sound advice to other members of staff on how to develop students' communication skills. However, there is inadequate specialist training for LSWs in working with Asperger's syndrome. A new training programme has been devised, but only a small number of senior staff are benefiting at the time of inspection.

11. Learning resources for literacy and numeracy at FSFC are unsatisfactory. LSWs are not trained to support the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. Residential accommodation for most students is poor. Overcrowding denies students privacy and raises their anxiety levels. Training opportunities in independent living skills are limited in residential accommodation. A new residence is under construction and the college plans to move in the near future.

12. Teachers in the partner GFE college are experienced and well qualified. GFE colleges provide good access to vocational facilities, and individual computers are available in some classrooms,

resource centres and in the base room. However, the largest base room in one GFE college has a leaking roof, is inadequate and poorly equipped when compared with other parts of the college.

13. FSFC carries out initial and pre-entry assessments as part of the initial placement visit. The process includes a visit by the student and their parent or carer to the course of his/her choice, where the relevant GFE college carries out its own assessment. The initial assessment of FSFC's students is not used by GFE teachers to support target setting in the vocational curriculum. Initial assessment for literacy and numeracy is poor at FSFC and assessments are not used to set targets in students' individual learning plans. There is no recognition that the identification and development of literacy and numeracy skills are a key responsibility of FSFC.

14. The initial assessment of independent living skills is good, with learners identifying which targets they first want to work towards. Monitoring of students' progress in independent living skills is poor. There is an effective system for assessing students' skills on entry, but achievement of targets is not recorded. Students' progress is reported weekly to parents by telephone and parents value this communication highly. A useful pen portrait of each student's needs and strengths is sent to their vocational course leader at the start of the academic year. However, the information is not updated as the student develops and many of the students' teachers do not have access to this information.

15. The achievement of learning goals, and academic and vocational qualifications is well monitored and recorded at the GFE college. However, there is no link between achievements at the GFE college and the targets set at FSFC. Vocational teachers contribute to reviews at the end of term and at half term. GFE college teachers support monitoring through informal reports with LSWs.

16. The use of local partnerships is very effective in enabling students to study in mainstream provision. However, the overall programme lacks coherence for most students, with insufficient links between the learning goals in each component part of the programme. The arrangements for attending courses in the partner colleges are satisfactory. FSFC college staff take care to match each student to the appropriate college course in terms of level. Consideration is also given to other issues, such as pressure of written work and sequencing of assignments. For a minority of students, the courses are not appropriate, students are bored and there is an insufficient choice of level 1 courses. The teaching of key skills in the GFE college is satisfactory and well documented.

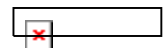
17. The use of LSWs both in the college and the residences is helpful for students, but the provision for independent living skills, literacy and numeracy lacks clarity. Very able students sometimes feel patronised by the tasks set in the independent living skills programme, and others find that the use of targets increases their levels of anxiety. The current accommodation arrangements do not allow the majority of students to take responsibility for their daily living skills. Four students who live in a separate house are better prepared for moving to independence, as they run the house themselves. FSFC staff do not make sufficient use of the naturally occurring opportunities to reinforce literacy and numeracy. The curriculum framework emphasises the importance for the students of developing an understanding of Asperger's syndrome, and of finding strategies for coping in mainstream. However, the curriculum does not promote other aspects of equal opportunities such as race and gender. The preparation for transition when leaving FSFC is thorough and effective. The one student who has progressed to higher education is achieving well both socially and academically. The work experience programme in the GFE college is well planned and carefully monitored both by the college and LSWs. Students' progress is well documented and students demonstrate considerable gains in social confidence. The arrangements for leisure time are satisfactory, with a combination of student choice and staff suggestions. Students use the local community well.

18. Personal support for students is very good. The LSWs know the students well and are able to provide the personal support that is required to attend a GFE college. Behaviour management is good. A major focus at FSFC is helping the students to develop strategies to cope with anxiety. This is done well. Each LSW has tutorial responsibility for one student, and reviews all aspects of progress weekly. The recording of progress is currently inconsistent and a new system has recently been implemented. There are very effective links with parents/carers, who are contacted weekly, with a brief account of what their son or daughter has been doing during the week. The induction programme is thorough and includes a series of overnight stays to familiarise students with the college. Risk assessment of students is thorough, but issues such as health and safety are not fully

covered at induction.

19. The student handbook is very helpful for students, and includes reference to the complaints procedures and the type of behaviour expected from students. For the current cohort there is no reference to equal opportunities in the student handbook, but this has been amended for the new intake. Careers guidance is thorough, Connexions staff are closely involved, working in the students' locality and within partner GFE colleges. The level of specialist therapeutic support has not matched the requirements set out in the students' schedule and purchase order. Too few therapists have been available, particularly for speech and language therapy. There has been insufficient emphasis in the curriculum on developing group work skills. The college has recently piloted some group projects, involving the speech and language therapist and a counsellor, and has introduced art therapy. These initiatives have been very successful.

Leadership and management



20. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The senior management team effectively disseminates the college's aims to work in partnership with other colleges and foster a better understanding of Asperger's syndrome. The principal has a clear vision for developing the provision further, but there is no strategic plan for FSFC which shows how these aims will be further developed. The college supplies monthly management reports to Priory in relation to its business targets. The working arrangements with Priory, following the change of ownership in October 2002, are still being fully developed. The college does not have a formally constituted governing body, and is currently in discussion with Priory about the establishment of an advisory body that will focus in particular on the quality of students' welfare and support. Currently there is poor oversight and supervision of FSFC by the Priory group.

21. The majority of students progress well while at FSFC. Day-to-day operational management of students' programmes is satisfactory. The head of education and the head of care work closely together, and there are weekly senior management team meetings. Issues arising from the minutes are raised at meetings in the residential accommodation. At its best, continuity of support for students is maintained by the shift arrangements, the use of a communications book and a specific handover period in the residences. However, it has not always been possible to provide consistency of staffing. There are weaknesses in communications with the GFE college. For example, the GFE college staff receive insufficient information about the individual learning goals. One impact of this can be seen in the unsatisfactory literacy and numeracy provision at FSFC. The academic and vocational curriculum is generally well maintained by the GFE college.

22. FSFC collected the views of students and parents in 2001, and is in the process of collating views for 2003, but there was no questionnaire in 2002. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences. This written work is a powerful testimony to the way students are feeling. The college has sometimes made changes as a result of this information, for example contact with parents is now more regular and meaningful, but responses to the questionnaire are not formally recorded. The response to issues raised in relation to vocational courses in the partner college is less effective. For example, the failure to respond to the dissatisfaction over students' placements on courses expressed by students and by staff in the partner college has had an adverse effect on students' achievement of their learning goals.

23. Quality assurance is not satisfactory. There is no monitoring of the memorandum of agreement with the partner college. Although senior staff from FSFC meet regularly with key staff in the partner college, and discuss issues relating to individual students, the memorandum is not sufficiently detailed and does not, for example, specify the funding arrangements for additional learning support provided by partner colleges, neither does it specify procedures for monitoring or review. Some teaching staff have not received any training from FSFC in relation to Asperger's syndrome. There are currently no formal arrangements for FSFC to observe teaching or to receive copies of the

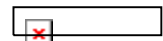
annual reviews of the courses attended by their students. FSFC has recently implemented a programme of observation of LSWs, but does not monitor the independent living skills programme. The self-assessment report lacks rigour and it does not grade teaching and learning. Staff and partner colleges have had little involvement in this process. The report is mainly descriptive, and does not identify all of the key weaknesses.

24. The college has satisfactory arrangements for staff supervision and appraisal, which form one part of the staff development programme. The principal is appraised by Priory. The staff development programme is not satisfactory, but has recently become more systematic and all LSWs attend training in key topics, such as health and safety, and food preparation. A recent development is the requirement that all LSWs take National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 3 in promoting independence. However, this is still in the early stages of development. Currently, there are some gaps in the training of LSWs, whose role requires complex skills. For example, they do not currently have systematic training in supporting students to improve their communication skills. This will be included in the NVQ level 3 programme, and the speech and language therapist plans to provide training in the new academic year.

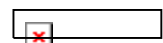
25. The college has an appropriate range of policies relating to the protection of students, and reports from the National Care Standards Commission are satisfactory. There are clear procedures for complaints and for recording incidents. However, the college is unclear about the requirement to report serious incidents to the LSC. The college has been slow to respond to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and to the SENDA. It has not yet completed an action plan in response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and has still to finalise the audit of buildings and equipment in response to the SENDA. Staff have had little training in equal opportunities and promotion of equal opportunities is insufficiently promoted in the students' programmes. There is no formal monitoring of students in respect of race and gender. The college promotes effectively issues in relation to Asperger's syndrome.

26. Residential accommodation is unsatisfactory. The current overcrowding is particularly inappropriate for the client group, and many students have found that this has added to their levels of anxiety. The college is aware of this and has an accommodation strategy that will provide additional bedroom space by September 2003. Financial management is satisfactory. However, the college does not have a management information system that can track the progress of individual students or record the elements of a student's programme in relation to the schedule and purchase order. Students are not receiving some elements of the programme specified in the schedule and purchase order. The provision for literacy, numeracy, communications and independent living skills at FSFC is unsatisfactory, and the college does not provide value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Literacy, numeracy, communication and independent living skills



Overall provision in this area is **Unsatisfactory (Grade 4)**

Strengths

- effective support for literacy and numeracy at the GFE college

- key skills well integrated into vocational programmes at the GFE college
- good development of social skills, communication skills and confidence
- effective initial assessment of independent living skills
- effective communication with parents and carers in all aspects of students' work
- good personal support for students.

Weaknesses

- poor initial assessment for literacy and numeracy at FSFC
- lack of strategy for literacy and numeracy provision at FSFC
- lack of qualified and experienced staff at FSFC
- inadequate target setting
- poor monitoring of progress in independent living skills
- poor residential accommodation
- insufficient compliance with schedule and purchase orders for some students.

Scope of provision

27. The provision of literacy, numeracy and key skills is made by the GFE college where it is integrated into students' courses. Students are following a range of academic and vocational courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level, for example first diploma in animal care, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) computing, and General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) levels in theatre studies, philosophy and history of art. The independent living skills curriculum taught at FSFC includes: personal hygiene; laundering; domestic cleaning and tidying; preparing food; independent travel; shopping; and taking part in social activities. All students are timetabled to spend several hours daily in the residences developing these skills with the help of their LSWs.

Achievement and standards

28. There is no initial assessment for, or planned teaching of literacy and numeracy at FSFC. At the GFE colleges, students undertake initial assessments which are appropriate for the level and nature of the course they are following. Initial assessment on the foundation course is thorough and initial assessment for key skills on level 2 programmes is also good. Progress towards academic learning goals is well monitored and recorded by the GFE college. There is no co-ordination of the achievement targets set by the local college and the social and behavioural targets set by FSFC.

29. At the GFE college, most students achieve their literacy and numeracy learning goals. The standard of students' work at the GFE college in relation to literacy and numeracy is satisfactory and the achievement of key skill qualifications across the student cohort ranges from good to less than satisfactory. Students themselves consider that the progress they make is good and they can identify a measurable improvement in their communications skills. Some students demonstrated a good standard of written work. In a number of instances, the level of the students' programme was below their prior level of attainment. This led to students following inappropriate schedules for literacy and numeracy, and covering skills that they had already learnt.

30. All students make satisfactory progress in developing skills for independence. Most make good progress in social skills and communication skills. They develop strategies for dealing with social situations and taking part in conversations. They are able to use more appropriate body language themselves and interpret non-verbal clues in other people. They start to be able to interrupt politely and use eye contact to indicate interest. Students develop confidence in their ability to cope with new situations and to handle their anxieties better. They make satisfactory progress in travelling independently and in cooking, shopping and dealing with their own laundry.

Quality of education and training

31. The teaching of literacy and numeracy at the GFE college is satisfactory or better. There was limited opportunity to observe literacy and numeracy using the timetables provided by FSFC. Teachers at the GFE colleges are technically competent and a number had received recent and relevant training in literacy and numeracy, and the national curriculum standards. Teachers involved in the delivery of key skills are specialist staff.

32. Students' individual learning plans are not shared between FSFC and GFE college teachers, therefore, GFE college teachers are unable to use students' individual goals when planning teaching. Some teachers ensured that their teaching was varied according to the different levels of ability of their students. On the foundation course, the tutor held regular lessons with students to update the individual learning programmes. At level 2, key skills are successfully integrated into students' courses.

33. Students are confident in what they are doing and know what they need to improve. They also benefit from access to the range of courses available through the partnership arrangements with the GFE colleges. A number of students were insufficiently challenged. Two students following an animal care course at the GFE college were identified by their key skills teacher as being wrongly

placed on a level 1 programme. The recommendation to move the students to a level 2 key skills programme received no response and consequently the students completed their portfolio requirements well in advance of the rest of the group. However, the courses offered by the GFE college provide learners with the opportunity to broaden their communication skills and enhance their personal development.

34. Some students, including those with dyslexia, are receiving additional support from the GFE colleges. FSFC also provides additional support for dyslexic students, but there is no systematic communication between the GFE college and FSFC. The GFE college uses a range of agencies, including the Connexions Service, to advise and guide students in relation to progression choices.

35. Communication skills are taught well. A recently introduced pilot 'dining and discussion' group at FSFC is carefully planned and well managed by qualified and experienced staff. Students make interesting observations and learn to listen and respond to each other. In independent living skills, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students are interested and attentive when acquiring new skills, but some show resentment at being supervised while undertaking tasks which are well within their capacity. The use of targets for independent living skills is poorly managed. Many students have the same targets for the whole year even when they have acquired the necessary skills. New skills that students are working on are frequently not recorded. The use of targets is not adequately explained to students. Some students resist setting new targets out of fear of having too many to be able to meet all of them. Some LSWs do not give students enough time for practising each step in a new task. The teaching of some skills is mistimed. One student was learning for the first time how to change and launder bed linen two days before the end of the college year.

36. Resources are unsatisfactory. There is inadequate specialist training for learning support staff in working with Asperger's syndrome. A new training programme has been devised, but only a small number of senior staff were benefiting from this at the time of the inspection. Residential accommodation for most students is poor. Overcrowding denies students necessary privacy and raises their anxiety levels. Training opportunities in independent living skills are restricted until a new residence under construction is ready.

37. The monitoring of students' progress in independent living skills is poor. However, students' progress is reported weekly to parents by telephone and parents value this communication highly. A useful pen portrait of each student's needs and strengths is sent to their vocational course leader at the start of the academic year. The information is not updated as the student develops and many of the students' teachers in the GFE college do not have access to the information.

38. The range of opportunities for students to develop their social skills is satisfactory. Students attend sports clubs and music events; visit restaurants and pubs; and go on weekend trips to places of interest. There are insufficient structured opportunities for working on communication, and literacy and numeracy skills.

39. Students receive good personal support from their allocated LSWs. Within the limits of a shift system, the same staff member supports the student with their GFE college course and with independent living skills at FSFC. They also accompany them to social events in the community. Staff act as mentors and friends. Students value being able to talk over anxieties or problems with someone who knows them well. A well-run counselling group and art therapy sessions provide more specialist therapeutic support, but there are insufficient opportunities for all students to attend these.

Leadership and management

40. The management of literacy and numeracy is poor. The FSFC staff have no qualifications nor have they received training in relation to national initiatives for literacy and numeracy. All literacy and numeracy teaching is done by teachers in the GFE colleges. FSFC does not assess the adequacy of such provision or monitor the quality of the teaching. Although the standards achieved by students in literacy and numeracy at the GFE college are satisfactory, the poor quality and lack of opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills at FSFC severely limit students' achievements in

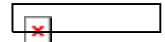
independent living skills.

41. There is no strategy to develop literacy and numeracy across the wider curriculum and there has been no response on the part of FSFC to the national agenda or national curriculum. The self-assessment report does not address literacy and numeracy provision.

42. Formal communications between the GFE college and FSFC with regard to course planning are inadequate. FSFC staff attend the weekly meeting held by the foundation faculty at a GFE college, but have little input into the development of the academic courses for students. The achievements of students with regard to literacy and numeracy are not monitored and individual goals are not set by FSFC. The management of the independent living skills programme is unsatisfactory. There is no monitoring of the quality of the programme. The self-assessment report is insufficiently critical. Equality of opportunity is not promoted with students. There is insufficient compliance with schedule and purchase orders for the provision of therapeutic support for some students.

1.

Vocational programmes



Overall provision in this area is **Satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- good individual support for students
- very good range of vocational courses
- good progression of students aged 16 to 19
- effective work experience and work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- inadequate individual learning plans
- insufficient planning of teaching to meet individual needs

- poor communication between FSFC and GFE college
- poor quality assurance.

Scope of provision

43. Students follow a wide range of vocational courses ranging from entry level to level 3 courses with a small number taking GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and A levels. The majority of students follow GCE vocational programmes at entry and level 2, these are all taught through the vocational curriculum of GFE colleges. Courses taken include computing, animal care, performing arts and business studies.

Achievement and standards

44. Student retention is satisfactory and in line with other specialist colleges. Two students completed the first year of foundation awards before transferring to more appropriate accreditation. Another withdrew from a first award in performing arts due to anxiety and will begin a new programme in journalism in the next academic year.

45. Achievements are good on accredited courses. There is good progression from entry level courses to level 2. Students demonstrate good practical skills. They derive substantial benefit from the wide range of vocational programmes available in the GFE colleges, although the work offered to some students placed on the entry level programmes has not been sufficiently demanding.

Quality of education and training

46. Most teaching in the GFE college is satisfactory or better. In the best lessons, students are motivated, and work had been carefully planned. Students are clear about what they are expected to learn. Teachers provide opportunities for students to make choices and develop independent learning skills. Well-paced activities encourage participation. In group work, for example, students on a care course had planned, served and were evaluating a picnic for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; they were clearly motivated by their experience and spontaneously began a debate about the dangers of deep water to wheelchair users. One student explained how the pupils were keen to show what they could do and how important it was not to patronise them. The lesson demonstrated clear acquisition of new skills and confidence in expressing opinions and ideas.

47. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, the organisation of lessons was poor and learning materials were inadequate. Two lessons observed did not have completed registers, lacked planning and students quickly lost interest. In poorer lessons, schemes of work and lesson plans did not take into account the individual needs of the students. Teaching and learning were poor on entry level courses. Learning objectives identified in planning did not match the targets identified in individual learning plans.

48. The main mechanism for communicating information from FSFC to the GFE college staff is the LSWs. This arrangement is informal and although the vocational teachers have access to learner files within the FSFC base room, these are rarely consulted. Information about communication strategies and preferred learning styles, is not transferred. In poor lessons, for example, this lack of consultation affected motivation and led to a lack of understanding about the progress students were making.

49. There is good access to facilities on all GFE college sites. Vocational teachers are generally knowledgeable and have reached good levels of expertise in their subjects. The most effective

teachers have good relations with their students and plan their lessons carefully; this was most evident in level 2 courses. The most successful GFE college staff integrated literacy, numeracy and communication strategies into their lessons. In animal care, for example, the use of a wide range of evaluation strategies, including quizzes and surveys, were used to explore concepts such as endangered species and the impact of extinction on the planet.

50. Good individual support for students was provided by LSWs, students were individually supported in all lessons observed. Many students benefited from the skilful clarification of tasks and reassurance provided by the LSWs. This was particularly important in terms of communication; in one lesson, for example, a student who came late to the session was brought into a group discussion through the sensitive introduction to the content by the LSW.

51. Students have access to a very good range of vocational courses. FSFC learners benefit from following the same guidance and assessment procedures to determine course suitability, as all other college students. However, behavioural and social assessments generated by FSFC staff are not used in conjunction with those of the GFE college. Within the GFE college there are clear targets to help the student achieve vocational learning goals. At FSFC, students have individual social and behavioural learning goals, but these are not shared. Consequently, there are many lost opportunities for reinforcement and development of learning.

52. There is effective use of work experience and work-based learning programmes. Students at levels 1 and 2 joined a well-organised programme of placements on vocational programmes. Placements were carefully matched to students' needs and well supported effectively by LSWs. These programmes are particularly effective in preparing students for employment and further vocational training. Detailed attention to transition within level 2 programmes has already led to the identification of next steps for Farleigh students. Both students observed in a group tutorial lesson knew already which courses they would be taking the following year, and were aware of the range of opportunities for future employment.

Leadership and management

53. There is a commitment by FSFC's local GFE college partners to improving performance and developing learning for students within the vocational curriculum. Some good practice has been developed within teams, but this is not always shared across the vocational programme and there is little formal evidence that FSFC is involved in the process. Partner GFE colleges are gradually developing their own expertise in supporting students with Asperger's syndrome. One programme tutor delivering GCE A-level programmes felt he was now in a position to meet effectively the learning and transition needs of his female FSFC student. She hopes to progress into higher education.

54. Quality assurance procedures are inadequate. The college self-assessment report does not accurately identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the vocational curriculum. FSFC does not actively manage the vocational learning programmes of its students. Lines of communication between staff are ineffective. The impact this has on students' learning is significant. For example, although vocational staff from the GFE college contribute to reviews at the end of term and at half term, this contribution input is not formalised and important details relating to achievement are exchanged via informal monitoring reports with LSWs.