

# Farleigh Further Education College, Frome

## Inspection Report 11-14 June 2007

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## Background information

## Inspection judgements

### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. Farleigh Further Education College Frome (FFECF) is an independent specialist college, owned by the Priory Healthcare Group who oversees the college. The college is situated near the centre of Frome in Somerset. It provides for 76 learners, aged 16 to 25, with 64 residential places and 12 attending on a daily basis. Of the resident learners, 56 are male and 8 are female. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds 67 learners, a further eight are funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and one learner is funded by Hampshire local authority (LA). There are six learners from minority ethnic groups. All learners at FFECF have a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome. Before joining the college, they may have previously attended special schools, received significant support in mainstream schools or experienced a breakdown of their placement at a mainstream school or general further education college.
2. The college works in partnership with two local general further education colleges where the majority of academic and vocational teaching is provided for learners. The provision includes a broad range of academic and vocational courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. It also includes work-based learning programmes as part of preparing for transition. Learning support is provided by FFECF staff. A base room is established at the Trowbridge campus of Wiltshire College. Residential accommodation is provided across five residences, four in Frome and one in Trowbridge. There is a learning centre at the FFECF's main site that provides study skills support for all learners together with a range of accredited courses.
3. The college's mission is to 'enable learners to achieve their learning goals, whilst helping them grow as individuals, gaining confidence in their abilities and accepting the complexities of Asperger's Syndrome'.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: contributory grade 2</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

4. This is a good college. Achievement and success rates are good overall, specifically at level 1 and across all academic subjects. A small number of learners do not achieve sufficiently well at entry level. Learners make very good progress in developing personal, social, communication and work skills. Destinations are good with the majority progressing into work, further or higher education.
5. Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, the good teaching has an emphasis on well planned and stimulating activities, good access to information communication technology (ICT) and good attention to breaking down the teaching of independent living skills activities into small achievable steps. In satisfactory teaching, there is sometimes insufficient time given to learners to allow them to achieve their learning outcomes or to contribute fully. Some learners are insufficiently challenged. Assessments are thorough and inform individual learning plans (ILPs). Teachers and support staff have a particularly good understanding of the effects of Asperger's Syndrome on learning and develop very effective strategies to support learning. Learners enjoy learning and attaining new knowledge and skills during their time at college.
6. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. The partnerships with local further education colleges provide a broad range of courses at different levels to suit all learners' abilities and interests. Residential arrangements enable learners to progress to more independent living. The good links with employers and with the community are very effective in developing social interaction skills. Comprehensive procedures are in place to promote the safety, wellbeing and protection of learners.
7. Support for learners is good overall and outstanding for specialist therapeutic provision. Specialist staff work very well together for the benefit of the learners. High levels of support are provided for learners across all activities of their programmes. There are good induction and tutorial arrangements and transition planning is highly effective.
8. Leadership and management are good. Strong leadership and diligent attention to improving outcomes for learners has led to outstanding partnership working, good transition arrangements and learners' destinations. Quality assurance is satisfactory and self-assessment is largely accurate. The college's promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Self-

assessment is largely accurate but there is insufficient use of data to inform judgements. The college provides good value for money.

#### Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

9. The college has good capacity to improve. Successful improvements to many aspects of the provision have been accompanied by well managed growth and a reinforcement of the benefits of strong partnerships. Quality assurance systems, despite some current operational shortcomings, have a good capacity to maintain and improve the provision further. Self-assessment is largely accurate and offers perceptive insights to areas to develop. Learners' achievements are good overall, as are transition arrangements and actual destinations.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

10. The college has taken good steps to improve since the last inspection. Strong leadership and a very clear commitment to improve processes and to monitor their implementation have led to better outcomes for learners. All the strengths identified at the last inspection have been maintained or improved further and most of the weaknesses have been remedied.

#### Key strengths

- good success rates in level 1 vocational qualifications and in academic subjects
- very good development of learners' personal, social and communication skills
- good assessment and recording of progress
- very good range of programmes and activities
- outstanding therapeutic support
- strong leadership and effective management of growth
- outstanding partnership working
- good promotion of equality of opportunity.

#### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the low success rates for entry level learners
- the quality of teaching and learning
- some ineffective implementation of quality assurance processes
- insufficient use of data to inform judgements and planning.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: grade 2

11. Learners' achievements are good overall. The majority of learners study towards a broad range of nationally accredited qualifications at two local further education colleges. The range of academic and vocational courses spans entry level to levels 1, 2 and 3. There are particularly high success rates for learners studying towards level 1 vocational qualifications and across the range of academic subjects. Achievement rates for level 2 learners have increased slightly over the past two years and are satisfactory. Whilst inspectors agree with the self-assessment report that overall achievements are good, the report does not acknowledge that there is lower completion or achievement rates for the few learners who enrol on entry level courses.
12. Learners make very good progress in developing personal, social and communication skills. The majority of learners show very effective skills in coping and dealing successfully with their anxieties. They are able to integrate very well within the local further education college and in the community and this assists in developing appropriate social interaction skills.
13. Many learners develop work skills very well through their work experience placements. Destinations are good, with the majority of learners progressing into open or supported employment, further and higher education. They also acquire the skills during their time at college that enable them to move into either independent or supported living. There is a good system in place to track learners' destinations and ensure they are fully supported until a positive outcome has been achieved.
14. Overall, learners make good progress against targets set in their individual learning plans (ILPs). Recording of progress is good with clear links to ILPs. There are regular reviews of progress with appropriate recording of progress made, but there is no effective system in place for summarising learners' overall progress.
15. The retention rate is satisfactory and in line with other specialist colleges. Attendance and punctuality are good.



## Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

16. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall although there is some good teaching. Better lessons are well planned to include a variety of stimulating activities that engage learners' interest and enjoyment. Questions are carefully targeted to each learner's abilities. Teachers use well designed learning materials, often using real life examples. In good teaching of independence skills, tasks are broken down into small achievable steps and learners are able to discuss the reasons behind the choices they make. Learners have good access to information and communication technology (ICT) in the college's well equipped learning centre, as well as in partner colleges. In satisfactory lessons, teachers do not always allow enough time to achieve the learning outcomes or for learners to answer questions. Quieter learners do not always have a chance to contribute fully and some learners are insufficiently challenged. The teaching and support for literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory. The college acknowledges in their self-assessment report that the arrangements for paired teaching observations at partner colleges have not been fully implemented.
17. Assessment and recording of progress are good. Learners' ILP targets are shared with all teaching and support staff. Teachers give instant, constructive feedback to learners on their progress within lessons and on ways to improve. Regular daily progress is recorded electronically by FFECE staff, including progress made in independence skills in residences. Detailed records are produced for half-term reviews and end-of-term reports. In work-based learning, support staff keep detailed daily records. However, partner college teachers do not have access to the electronic system. There is no reliable system in place to collate the overall progress by learners against literacy and numeracy targets.
18. The college provides very well for the additional needs of learners. Day learners are given the same support to meet their individual needs as their residential peers receive. Understanding by staff of the effects of Asperger's Syndrome on learning is excellent. The college takes a flexible approach to the timing, venues and staffing of lessons where small changes help learners participate. Useful and well thought out strategies to aid learning are provided for partner college teachers.
19. There is a good range of programmes to meet the individual needs and interest of learners. They can choose from a broad range of courses through the partner colleges' provision. Academic, vocational and pre-vocational courses include a wide choice of disciplines. A small but well selected range of work-based learning opportunities enables learners to gain national vocational qualifications. Pre-vocational programmes are also

provided in the college's learning centre for a small number of learners who enrol mid-term. A very thorough programme of independence training takes place in residences and in the community. There is good participation by both residential and day learners in a wide range of enrichment activities, which learners enjoy, and good opportunities for work experience. The college contributes very well to learners' capacity to stay safe and healthy, for example, through road safety risk assessments and on 'stranger danger' for the more vulnerable learners.

20. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity underpins all college activities. There is particularly good focus on enabling all learners to achieve their full potential through very effective links with two partnership colleges, within the community and through the work experience programme. There are comprehensive procedures in place to promote the safety, wellbeing and protection of learners.
21. Support for learners is good overall and outstanding for specialist therapeutic provision. The majority of learners have a multiplicity of issues linked to Asperger's Syndrome when they first enrol at the college. The excellent range of specialist staff employed by the college work very well together for the benefit of the learners. They are involved in all aspects of learner progress, from pre-entry to transition. There is good understanding of the support needs of learners, and inspectors agreed with college that they provide for this particularly well with high levels of support. All learners receive one-to-one support. There are regular meetings between learners and their personal tutors to review targets and progress. These contribute very effectively to the progress learners make in their personal and social development. There is a highly effective transition programme that begins during the thorough induction process. Transition reviews contain detailed actions for the next stage of learners' lives. There are effective links with Connexions personal advisers and with local jobcentre staff. Although the learning centre contains a section for careers materials, the range is limited.

Leadership and management Good: grade 2

*Contributory grades:*

*Equality of opportunity* *Good: grade 2*

22. Leadership and management are good. The college is strongly led and the work of the staff is built on a clear mission and shared sense of purpose. Strategic planning is thorough and sets out what the college aims to do and how it will know if it is doing it effectively. Considerable recent growth has

been very well managed and coordinated across the main college site and the two partnership colleges, who share the teaching and learning, and across the five residential houses.

23. The college works outstandingly well with a wide range of partners and other agencies. Local employers are particularly well used to provide learners with valuable work experience. Relationships with Wiltshire College of Further Education are mature and highly effective in offering learners a diverse, supported curriculum in a wholly integrated setting. A more recent relationship with the City of Bath College is already working well, expanding learners' choice of curriculum and environment further still.
24. Quality assurance is satisfactory. The quality assurance cycle is comprehensive. It establishes clear standards and expectations across all aspects of the college's work. Supervisory reviews and appraisals of staff are regular and thorough and are clearly linked to strategic aims and training needs. However, some elements of quality assurance are ineffective in practice. Despite a recent agreement with partner colleges to undertake joint graded lesson observations, in 2006/07 only one observation was conducted. Whilst the college knows a great deal about the progress made over time by its individual learners, its use of data to make quantitative and comparative evaluations of achievements and standards and to inform subsequent planning is underdeveloped. The college's self-assessment process is evaluative and systematic, and all staff are consulted about its findings. However, there is no formal mechanism whereby staff at different levels of responsibility may contribute to the self-assessment prior to its initial drafting. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.
25. Communication between staff at the college is good. Information about learners is exchanged vigorously, both formally and informally. Learners' ILPs are detailed and dynamic web-based documents, but are not yet available in that medium to staff at the partner colleges. Learners' opinions are canvassed and listened to in a number of ways, and the learner council plays an active role in contributing to the day-to-day management of the college.
26. Staff are well qualified. The college values staff development highly and invests significantly in it. Staff gain a good range of additional skills and qualifications to support their work with learners. The college deliberately and successfully blurs the distinction between care, support and teaching without compromising the professional skills each employee brings to their role.

27. The college is fully compliant with all acts of equality legislation and safeguarding. Equality of opportunity is good. An equality and diversity committee is very active in promoting and monitoring actions to challenge prejudice, raise awareness and understanding and modify discriminatory attitudes or behaviour. All staff have been trained in their duties and responsibilities under the respective acts.
28. Governance, as carried out by the parent company, the Priory Group, is good. The company offers direct technical and financial support, and commissions regular quality assurance checks by an external consultant. A reconstituted advisory board now acts as a further external scrutineer of college strategy and performance. Some aspects of corporate management, however, inhibit the local capacity of college staff to exercise their own professional judgement in the best interests of learners. For example, there are excessive restrictions for learners on access to web-based media. This inhibits both learning and the college's work in developing learners' own strategies for coping with this particular aspect of their lives.
29. Accommodation and learning resources are good. They provide a secure and stimulating learning environment. Financial management is good and the college represents good value for money.

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