

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Farleigh College, Frome

Date of visit: 26 June 2008

Context

Farleigh Further Education College (Frome) (FFEC(F)) is an independent specialist college of FE, which caters for learners with a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome (AS). All learners aim to live, study and work in mainstream situations. The curricular needs of the learners are met through partnerships with Wiltshire College and the City of Bath College. The individual independence training needs of the learners are provided through the residential settings. At the previous inspection the college's effectiveness was judged to be good. Currently 67 learners are in residence at Farleigh College and 10 attend on a daily basis.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in ensuring that learners at entry level achieve well, and that the destinations of all learners match their long-term goals?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college identified that the poor success rates at entry level were often linked with insufficient initial guidance, so that learners were not always on the most appropriate courses. During the pre-entry period for 2007/08 the college made good use of the partner colleges. Learners attended taster courses, discussed their options and spent time deciding which programme to follow. Once on programme, weekly monitoring meetings were held to oversee progress. The outcomes for 07/08 are much improved, with 18 learners out of 21 likely to achieve.

Significant work has been done in developing the transition programme so that learners' destinations match their long term goals. Staff liaise with agencies in the target area, and ensure that support is maintained once learners have left. The college maintains data to record whether or not destinations are sustainable. Results are very positive, showing that post college destinations are successful.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in assuring the quality of all teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college has introduced much greater rigour into its observation of teaching and learning. Three aspects of the provision are observed: the study skills and literacy and numeracy support in the learning centres; the work in partner colleges, and the independence training in the residences. At the time of the previous inspection there was very little observation of the work in partner colleges. In joint observations in partner colleges, Farleigh College staff focus on the way in which support is provided, and the use made of the support staff in the classroom. The number of observations has increased and the college has worked hard to develop consistency of judgements. Support staff have been involved in a local project to develop the skills needed for developing independence skills, and are using these in the residences. They too are observed working with learners. The college has placed much greater focus on the quality of teaching and learning, but the pro-forma for observation of Farleigh College teaching staff does not place sufficient emphasis on what has been learnt, or how the teacher knows that learning has taken place.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in the use of data to measure progress of all learners?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college's management information system (MIS), in particular the 'learner gateway', is much improved since the previous inspection, when it was in its infancy. Staff can access termly records of progress from all aspects of a learner's programme which include partner college progress, additional study support and independent living skills. The college is in the process of enhancing its systems further by enabling staff to access the records in real time. The college does not yet present its data to show the distance travelled by learners and does not have headline indicators to compare year on year progress in, for example, the transition to independent living. Achievements are not analysed by race and gender.

What progress has been made in the implementation of quality improvement processes?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The college now has a well thought through quality cycle and produces monthly reports on progress. This is just completing its first year of implementation. The self-assessment process continues to be inclusive and all sections of the college have been trained and supported to self-assess. The training plan, developed annually, includes mandatory core topics for specific groups of staff and some of these can now be accessed on line. Most of the training takes places at the end of the year, although opportunities for training are increasingly being offered during the year.

Stakeholder feedback forms are collated and reported upon. Participants at learner reviews complete an evaluation of the process. The college is starting to use the recognition and recording of progress and achievement stages as a quality improvement tool. Targets for independent living are monitored closely and support staff are improving their effectiveness in developing these.