

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Farleigh College, Frome

Date of visit: 16 June 2009

Context

Farleigh College of Further Education Frome is an independent specialist residential college, 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 last inspection the college's effectiveness was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has been made in ensuring that learners' destinations match their long term goals?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in ensuring that learners' destinations match their long term goals. The transition programme has been modified because an increasing number of learners have mental health needs, which leads to increased anxiety in relation to significant life changes. The college has responded appropriately, following a drop in retention rates in 2007-2008, to put more support in place for those learners who have mental health needs, and for 2008-2009 retention rates have improved. The transition programme this year has included the opportunity for five learners who want to progress to employment, to follow a 'learn to earn' programme of extended work experience. One of the learners has obtained holiday employment as a result of that. Increasingly, the staff spend more time in liaison with other agencies such as social services, to ensure that learners are supported when moving into residential accommodation away from home. The college has changed its processes for maintaining data to record whether or not destinations are sustainable, as they have found that questionnaires are not as successful in eliciting responses as personal phone calls. The college has been particularly successful in ensuring that the processes for

application for application for disabled students allowance (DSA) is completed early in the year, where learners are progressing to higher education (HE). The college has yet to present its destinations data in its self-assessment report (SAR) in a form that provides evidence of year on year progress in matching learner long term goals to actual destinations. The presentation of data to reflect the college's strengths in its outcomes was an area for development at the last inspection.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in assuring the quality of all teaching and learning in partner colleges?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in its arrangements to quality assure the teaching and learning in partner colleges. In addition to observing its own support staff, it now has an agreement to carry out joint observations. Only three joint observations have been completed, which has been disappointing, but the principle of joint observations has now been established. The college also has an agreement whereby it is provided with information about the partner college's overall observation grades across all areas. This enables them to raise any issues of concern.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in developing policies in response to the most recent equalities duties?	Reasonable progress
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At the last monitoring visit, the college was not recording achievements in relation to ethnicity. It has now put this into place, although this is not produced in the SAR. The college has made reasonable progress in responding to the most recent equalities duties. It has a single equalities scheme, which includes sexual orientation and religious faiths. Its action plan and equality impact measures focus on areas that impact most on the learners in the college, in particular aspects of sexuality and disability. It does not currently have policy statements in relation to transgender issues, although it has supported learners and their families for where this situation has arisen. Bullying and discriminatory behaviour are not tolerated. It is not uncommon for staff to have to spend significant amounts of time explaining to learners how their inappropriate use of language may unintentionally offend people. For some learners this is an important feature in developing their social skills, but ways of responding to this are not shared amongst staff. A variety of activities has been held and planned to raise learners'

awareness. However, the college has yet to develop fully its strategy for policy implementation and training so that it can monitor the extent to which all learners have an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity that prepares them to move into mainstream settings.

How much progress has been made in the implementation of the learner involvement strategy?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in implementing its strategy for learner involvement. It recognised that the arrangements whereby it had a separate learner involvement committee were not appropriate, and for this academic year its functions have been devolved to the elected student council. This council has been involved in a range of decision-making activities, including deliberations about the college's mission statement. Students have discussed the relatively low representation of people from racial and ethnic minorities in the college, but they have not yet been asked to scrutinise college policies in order to assess their potential impact on different groups. The learners are involved in a range of feedback activities, such as satisfaction surveys, and they are able to contribute to interviews for new staff and to the observation of lessons. Students are represented on the advisory board and the minutes are fed back to the learners at house meetings. The impact of the learner involvement activities over the past year has been evaluated. However, the actions identified for implementation do not adequately reflect the full range of opportunities the learners have for involvement. Recently learners have been asked to join committees or forums in other organisations, which is particularly effective in promoting their involvement in public life.