

Inspection of The Sixth Form College Farnborough

Inspection dates: 28 September to 1 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Education programmes for young people	Outstanding
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Since September 2017, The Sixth Form College Farnborough (the college) has been part of The Prospect Trust, a multi-academy trust. Currently 3,915 students study at the college, with almost all of them aged between 16 and 18. At the time of the inspection, there were 14 students with high needs. Students travel to the college from a wide geographical area. Almost all students study level 3 courses, with just under two thirds studying A-level courses. Around a third of the students at the college are on mixed programmes of study combining A levels and vocational courses. The college offers 33 A-level courses, with the largest being in psychology and mathematics. Of the 11 vocational courses, the largest are in criminology and business. The college does not subcontract any provision.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Students greatly enjoy their time at the college. They rightly value the very high levels of mutual respect that exist throughout the college community. They feel confident in seeking help and support from both teachers and peers if needed. Students, including those with high needs, develop their social skills and confidence very well. They quickly make new friends in their lessons, tutorials and in the wide programme of additional learning in which they take part. Students participate with enthusiasm in the college's musical productions and numerous sports teams and performance groups. They lead clubs such as the debating society and subject societies.

Students concentrate hard in lessons, attend well and apply themselves admirably to the tasks that are set for them. They listen carefully to responses from their peers and contribute to discussions and practical work enthusiastically. They are enthused by the high levels of passion that teachers have for their subjects, which inspire students to learn.

Students very quickly develop detailed knowledge and understanding of the subjects they study and improve their practical skills to very high levels. For example, A-level sociology students understand how concepts of social inequality apply to education, and can explain in detail the historical and systemic reasons why more boys than girls take science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. A-level history students rapidly develop a detailed knowledge of the economic and political background of fascist Italy. They are able to explain the concepts of nationalism and socialism with confidence and clarity. Performing arts students learn swiftly how to apply theoretical knowledge of dance choreographers such as Bob Fosse and Alvin Ailey to produce high-quality practical work.

The vast majority of students, including those with high needs, quickly make good, and often excellent progress. As a result, almost all students achieve the qualifications they need for their next steps.

Students appreciate greatly how staff treat them as adults and how effectively staff oversee and support their well-being and academic progress. Students benefit from very high levels of support from teaching and support staff to help them stay at college, develop their confidence and succeed. As a result, students are extremely committed to their studies. Students, including those with high needs, feel very safe at college. They know how to report any concerns they have.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, managers, staff and The Prospect Trust's academy quality councillors have a very clear, highly aspirational and extremely ambitious vision for all their students. They ensure that students succeed academically and flourish personally during their time at college. Students understand clearly the significance of working hard and the importance of looking after and supporting each other.

Leaders know the quality of their provision in detail. They focus intently and successfully on improving the quality of the very small number of courses that underperform. Experienced and well-qualified academy quality councillors support and challenge senior leaders very effectively. They understand their governance roles well. They work closely with safeguarding staff to oversee the effectiveness of their recent work to help students to understand their responsibilities around sexual harassment. They know the strengths and the very few weaknesses of the college in detail and improve weaknesses rapidly.

Leaders have made sure that their curriculum meets the needs of their students. Leaders quickly recognised the impact of the pandemic on subjects such as languages, sciences, mathematics and performing arts. They sensibly supported students to fill gaps in learning by timetabling extra lessons to help students develop their theoretical, analytical and practical skills that had been negatively affected by the effects of lockdown, and to improve their confidence.

Managers and teachers design the order in which they teach topics very carefully so that students can develop essential knowledge quickly. This allows students to rapidly understand more complex concepts and materials and to apply their learning effectively. For example, in A-level English, new students build well on their GCSE English skills of text analysis. They learn successfully how to use persuasive language and deepen their knowledge of grammatical terminology. This helps them quickly develop the key knowledge that they need to access more complex content. In health and social care, students study verbal and non-verbal communication and the impact these have on relationships. This prepares students very well for their work experience in care settings.

Highly experienced and well-qualified staff expertly design and teach lessons that break down information and skills into topics that are easy to understand. Teachers check and build on previous learning frequently and skilfully. Students rapidly develop connections across different topics and improve their knowledge and skills. For example, in A-level graphics, students initially learn line drawing, which allows them to later manipulate images and text in a digital format with ease. Staff model essay writing carefully to enable students to understand fully how to plan and write essays. Students quickly develop these essential academic skills that prepare them very well for their next steps. In A-level sociology and A-level English, students develop and improve their abilities to debate and argue in a respectful and productive manner. Students can explain accurately and with confidence what they have learned. For example, in A-level geography, students understand in detail the process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide and the impact this has on the planet. A-level media students develop very high levels of skill in image and sound manipulation.

Teachers check how well students understand their learning thoroughly. They quickly identify and help students to fill any gaps in their knowledge. Teachers provide precise and timely feedback so that students clearly understand their strengths, know specifically what they need to improve and produce better quality work.

Staff benefit from a carefully planned and highly effective programme of professional development that enhances both their teaching skills and practical knowledge. Leaders and managers act quickly to identify and improve any weaknesses in teaching and maintain the high quality of students' learning.

Teachers understand in detail how they can best support students with high needs and those with special educational needs. Teachers identify students who need extra help quickly and support them extremely well so that these students can participate in learning fully and successfully. As students grow in confidence and develop greater independence, staff sensitively reduce the amount of support that students require.

Staff prepare students comprehensively for their next steps after college. They make sure that students receive clear, useful and impartial advice to help them plan their future careers. Tutors and careers guidance staff provide beneficial and unbiased advice and guidance to help the large number of students who want to proceed to university. They support students well with their university applications and personal statements. Specialist tutors guide and support students' applications to prestigious universities and specialist areas such as drama and music colleges, art courses and medical, veterinary or dentistry courses. Students complete university applications with confidence and most proceed to courses of their choosing.

Leaders and managers have created a highly effective tutorial programme designed explicitly to meet the needs of students. They sensibly concentrate on enabling students to feel safe and at ease in their first few weeks of their college life. Specialist tutors work closely and successfully with students to help them get to know their peers, feel comfortable and happy at college, and understand how and to whom they should report any concerns. Students then study carefully designed topics on subjects such as personal values, right and wrong, and staying safe from radicalisation and extremism. This learning provides students with the skills that they need to live and thrive on their own in modern Britain.

Students improve their knowledge of equality of opportunity and the diversity of society during their time at college. For example, performing arts students discuss choreography that depicts racism and racial segregation. They explore topics such as stereotyping with sensitivity and in detail. Students studying A-level English evaluate the changing use of the spoken and written word through the study of representation and the gendered use of language.

Students and parents and carers are justifiably extremely positive about the quality of education at the college. Staff are very proud to work at the college. They rightly speak with enthusiasm about the positive relationships they enjoy with colleagues and students. Staff, including early career teachers, value leaders' support to help them manage their workload and improve their quality of life. Leaders and managers take care of staff with specific needs as a result of the pandemic extremely well. This support enables staff who might otherwise struggle to continue to be effective in their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff make sure that students are safe at the college. Well-trained safeguarding staff attend frequent and useful meetings with other safeguarding specialists in the county to help them stay up to date with safeguarding topics. They record safeguarding concerns in detail and follow them up assiduously.

Safeguarding staff question groups of students carefully to find out about their concerns regarding sexual harassment and abuse. They ask students about the most appropriate ways of covering these topics to ensure that students will benefit from increased knowledge of these subjects. Leaders ensure that staff are recruited safely.

Provider details

Unique reference number	145057
Address	Prospect Avenue Farnborough Hampshire GU14 8JX
Contact number	01252 688200
Website	www.farnborough.ac.uk
Principal	Catherine Cole
Provider type	16–19 academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal (quality), as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Andy Fitt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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