

## Sparsholt College Group

It's been a very busy academic year to date at our Sparsholt campus with significant works underway to prepare for the delivery of the government's new flagship qualifications, T Levels, and we've also had a visit from His Majesty's Inspectors, Ofsted.

The inspection took place 10-13 October 2023 and we're extremely proud of the results:

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>

The overall effectiveness of the College is 'good' (Grade 2), with outstanding grades in three of the four key judgement areas. The Quality of Education was graded 'good' as not enough learners passed their English and maths GCSE resits (this is a national issue which is very much a Covid legacy). Unfortunately, this judgement is a limiting grade when determining the overall effectiveness of any college.

Our High Needs provision was also judged to be outstanding, and this area of provision is a particular growth area at both of our campuses. We now have more than 200 learners on Foundation learning programmes and our work has been recognised by Hampshire County Council who have invested over £550,000 in our facilities to improve accommodation for learners with more complex needs.

Finally, there is a new sub-judgement in the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF), and I'm delighted to report that the college makes a 'strong contribution to meeting skills needs' of employers and other relevant stakeholders and the local, regional and national economy. This is the highest grade possible for this aspect of the inspection. Unsurprisingly we have hosted the management teams from a number of colleges across England this term who were keen to see our facilities and witness the outstanding practices observed by Ofsted.

Colleges are currently facing the biggest educational reforms in 70 years (since the introduction of A Levels) with the introduction of T Levels. These qualifications are designed to prepare learners for direct entry to skilled employment and are seen as a college-based apprenticeship programme which involve a large industry placement. To enable colleges to align better with industry the government have provided colleges with funding to upgrade their facilities and resources so they better reflect what learners will see and use whilst 'on the job'.

At Sparsholt we've used our monies to upgrade the farm estate which has seen little investment in the past 25 years. The existing beef barn has been converted into a new milking parlour which will allow learners to gain experience of both manual and robotic milking systems. This work is almost complete and the new equipment will be installed in the next few weeks to allow the herd to move into their new facility in May. The existing milking parlour will then be converted into an Agritech teaching facility where learners will be able to see all of the data related to the herd such as milk yield, dietary impact and so on. This will provide an excellent resource for both college and University Centre Sparsholt students, and we're pleased to report that this year we have introduced doctorate level studies into our curriculum offer providing a clear pathway into research following the completion of masters studies.

To provide better teaching accommodation for our university students the Office for Students (OfS) have provided a £4 million grant to build new laboratories for this level of study. Due to current construction costs being extremely high the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership have provided an additional £1million to enable this facility to be built. Some of the old portacabins which have been used as classrooms for the past 15 years were dismantled last week as work begins on building the new Higher Education Science Centre; this is expected to open its doors to students in October.

Smaller projects underway to ensure our learners get the best access to equipment and resources include the internal refurbishment of an existing building to create an arable technology classroom. This will house our new tractor and welding simulators, and also provide learners with live data on the crops across our farm estate. We're also installing an aeroponic vertical farming unit in our horticulture department exposing our learners to new techniques which can reduce carbon emissions and water usage.

Finally this year sees our Sparsholt campus celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary having first opened its doors in 1899. We are planning a series of celebratory events over the next 12 months launching with our Chelsea Flower show garden titled 'Plants, Routes and Branches'. The exhibit will explore the history of plant introductions from Hampshire whilst celebrating the impact of influential horticulturists and the role the college has played in their professional growth.

We look forward to welcoming parish members to the campus to view our refurbished facilities once they're open!

**Julie Milburn**

**Principal and CEO**