

WARWICKSHIRE COLLEGE GROUP
APPROVALS COMMITTEE VISIT
Farriers Registration Council



Established under the
Farriers (Registration) Act 1975

16-17 JUNE 2026

Report of the Farriers Registration Council
Established under the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975, as amended

FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL APPROVAL COMMITTEE VISIT TO WARWICKSHIRE COLLEGE: 16-17th June 2026.

Introduction

1. The Farriers Registration Council (FRC) is charged under Section 11 (1) (a) and (d) of the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 (FRA) with approval of any course of training which the Council considers is designed to confer on persons completing it sufficient knowledge and skill for carrying out the shoeing of horses; and any institution which the Council considers is properly organised and equipped for conducting the whole or any part of a course of training approved by the Council. The Council may refuse its approval or withdraw such approval previously given. The Council is further charged under Section 12 of the Act with keeping itself informed of the nature of the instruction given at institutions approved under the last foregoing section of the Act to persons attending courses approved under that section.
2. So long as the institution offers a course of training in farriery, the FRC has both a right and a duty to keep itself informed of the standard of the courses and the institution, and to reassure itself that the courses are of a high standard and convey the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to join the Register of Farriers. The Council carries out this duty by appointing an Approvals Committee (AC) to visit the institution as may be required, and to report and make recommendations to the Council.
3. The Colleges and Approved Training Farriers (ATFs) together deliver the farrier standard, which outlines the required knowledge, skills and behaviours and is available on the Skills England website at [Farrier / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#) currently version 1.6.
4. The Assessment Plan for the End Point Assessment (EPA) is also available on the Skills England website. [ST0172 Farrier L3 AP for Publication 20.10.23](#) currently version 1.5.
5. VetSkill is the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) and carries out the EPA. The Colleges act as approved examination centres on behalf of VetSkill. On successful completion of the EPA, the apprentice may use the post-nominal QFS (Qualified to Farrier Standard).
6. The apprenticeship in farriery usually takes around 42 months plus the EPA period. Apprentices are employed by an Approved Training Farrier (ATF) and undertake block release to one of the farriery colleges. Farriery Placement Officers (FPOs) from the colleges visit the apprentices in the workplace to ensure their welfare, check health and safety, and to liaise between the ATFs and colleges in relation to the apprentices' training. Currently, the FPO role is completed by the lecturing staff both virtually and face-to-face for WCG.
7. The purpose of an AC visit is to gather evidence that may be evaluated in order to provide assurance to both the FRC and in turn the public that training standards are

being met and arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The AC for this visit consisted of:

- a. Tom Smith FWCF GradDip ELR, Chair AC
- b. Stephen Newman CertEd FWCF
- c. Sam Black

8. The AC visited Warwickshire College Group (WCG) on 16th and 17th June 2026 and were welcomed by Sara-Jane Watkins, CEO and Principal, Lorna Walters, Head of School; Louise Ball, Principal of Moreton Morrell; Chris Gately, Director of Quality, Student Experience & Inclusion; Ben Fairhurst, Head of Quality and Ben Hart, Lead Farrier. During the two-day visit, the AC also had discussions with: the farriery lecturers who are also currently the FPOs; Diane Blackie, Senior Instructor Technician (Equine); Georgie Giles, Work-Based Learning Manager; Hugh Robbins, Employer Services; staff dealing with library services, accommodation and pastoral care, equality and diversity, safeguarding and learning support, and met with seven apprentices.

9. The AC had the opportunity to talk to group 47L on block 6, which consisted of seven apprentices, six male and one female, with an average age of 20 on the Level 3 Farriery Course and due to take the EPA in May 2027.

10. At the conclusion of the visit, the AC discussed an outline of their findings, including proposed recommendations to the FRC with Lorna Walters and Louise Ball.

11. Following the AC visit of 16th and 17th June 2026, a draft report was supplied to give WCG the opportunity to comment on, or correct, any matters that may have been factually incorrect.

Historical Background

12. The previous AC visit to Warwickshire College was on 1st and 2nd July 2024, and the following recommendations were made to, and subsequently accepted by, the Council:

- a. The Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024 and any further FE Commissioners' reports are provided as soon as they are available, and progress following the Ntl is monitored. A Costed Business Plan is to be provided by 4/4/25.
- b. Logging of 'off-the-job training' by the apprentices is checked to ensure it is completed in normal working hours and complies with ESFA rules.
- c. Equipment such as anvils is key to effective training delivery; the AC will wish to see that regular maintenance checks and fault reporting are being carried out in the forge area, and actions required carried out without delay, on its next visit. The AC will wish to see evidence that effective maintenance to the gas fires has been carried out, and the AC will also wish to see evidence that extraction flue parts have been fitted and are effective, both at its next visit.

- d. Documentation including the Master Template 683E Farrier, Scheme of Work, and Training Plan are updated to reflect the fact there has been an EPA since the beginning of 2023. References to the DipWCF as the EPA, to “Diploma Shoeing”, “Diploma Style Professional Discussions,” should be updated and correct, and links to the current EPAO rather than the previous one provided. The AC will wish to see that references relate to the extant EPAO and do not include references to “Diploma ... (etc)” at its next visit.
- e. Attention to detail in the production of the farriery meeting minutes is required so that they correctly identify the dates of the meetings, those present and those absent, and the actions which result from meetings, along with follow-up on actions resulting from previous meetings.
- f. The 2024 Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan (SARQUIP) be provided to the FRC as soon as it is completed. The SAR includes achievement data and the EPA results. The QUIP includes the areas for improvement identified in the SAR.
- g. The AC recommends that the QUIP is used more effectively to ensure that identified improvements are actioned.
- h. The lesson observations are used to produce an effective method of sharing good practice and the development of a clear action plan for improvement of teaching and learning. The AC will wish to see evidence of the use of a wider range of methods and see evidence of improved layout at its next visit. The AC will wish to see evidence of areas for improvement having been put into effect and see evidence of lesson observations and action plans for improvement having been put into effect at its next visit.
- i. Warwickshire College ensures its registered farrier members of staff record sufficient CPD on the College records so that the College can be certain they are meeting the College’s requirements. Farriery department staff who may be registered farriers shall be subject to two discrete CPD regimes; while some learning and developmental activities may meet the requirements of both regimes, care should be taken to avoid confusing the requirements.
- j. Warwickshire College reviews the provision of online practical training in view of the results of the May 2024 practical assessments. WCG is asked to provide an analysis of the reduction in time spent in college by apprentices, what effect this may have on teaching and learning of practical skills and whether there may be any correlation with lower levels of attainment at assessment in respect of practical skills relative to theoretical knowledge.
- k. Up-to-date copies of standard textbooks, such as Adams and Stashak’s Lameness in Horses, are made available to ensure apprentices have access to the most up-to-date information.
- l. Information and evidence requested from the regulator of the farrier profession, the FRC, including in relation to approvals matters, are provided promptly.
- m. The college is asked to note that the entry standard required for the farriery profession is GCSE English at grade C or above, or IELTS level 6. This requirement is to be applied in every case.
- n. WCG at Morton Morrell continues to be approved by the FRC to deliver farriery apprenticeship training for two years until 2026 in accordance with FRC policy. The FRC Policy for Approvals also directs that revisits may be carried out when concerns arise. The purpose of any re-visit would be to consider the progress in addressing the recommendations above made by the

Council and to assess the quality of provision of farriery training in the light of measures set out by the Further Education Commissioners and Place Based Team in the Ntl and Intervention Summary Report and/or the Costed Business Plan.

AC observations/responses from all recommendations (a-n)

- a. This has been completed satisfactorily and Warwickshire College is now out of special measures.
- b. Off-the-job training hours are logged regularly, with regular audits performed by the Work-Based Learning manager. If apprentices are falling behind, they will appear on a risk register and are contacted as a matter of urgency. If an apprentice continues to not log hours, they can be subject to a break in learning and will not be able to practice as a farrier apprentice until this has been rectified. The college is incentivised to ensure this is complete, as funding is quickly withdrawn should hours not be logged satisfactorily.
- c. Forge equipment is subject to a continuous cycle of maintenance. Some anvils are looking a little tired, but anything unsafe is immediately withdrawn from use and rectified. Gas forges are worked hard and servicing is scheduled annually. The gas piping to the forge has been replaced since the last visit. The coke forge is in working order now, although farriery apprentices rarely use this forge as it is used by the Blacksmithing course.
- d. Documentation has been updated to reflect the EPA, the current EPAO, and links are provided in the handbook for apprentices.
- e. Farriery meeting minutes are generally well drafted and are circulated amongst those who are not able to attend.
- f. There is still work to be done around the SAR and QIP. Given the Quality Assurance system has changed, the AC is reassured that this will improve. This continues to be a recommendation (see new recommendation a).
- g. As (f). This is included in the recommendations (a).
- h. With regular Quality Assurance and Advanced Practitioner walk-throughs and deep dives, lesson observations are more common and are now shared in a timely fashion by email, often within an hour of the observation, with the person being observed, the Quality Assurance team and the head of College copied in.
- i. Staff CPD is completed to FRC and Warwickshire College requirements and good record-keeping has been demonstrated.
- j. Warwickshire College continues to monitor assessment results; a clearer picture has developed around the current EPA, and the assessment method could be contributing to the poorer results across the practical assessments in particular.

- k. The stock of books and journals, both online and hard copy, is monitored by library staff, and up-to-date versions of all relevant farriery textbooks are kept in at least one format.
- l. Information was shared in a timely fashion prior to this report.
- m. Warwickshire College has a comprehensive enrolment process that ensures minimum entry requirements are met. The software programme 'E-Sign up' is being utilised to reduce paperwork and margin of error during enrolment.
- n. Following the 2026 visit, the AC recommends that Warwickshire College continue to be approved by the FRC to deliver farriery apprenticeship training for two years (until 2028) in accordance with the FRC Approvals policy (see recommendations).

Financial Viability and Probity

- 13. Warwickshire College Group (WCG) Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2025, prepared by external auditors RSM UK Audit LLP and signed on 28th January 2026, were provided to the FRC as part of the information pack prior to the visit on 16-17 June.
- 14. In 2025, total reserves were £56.522m, total income £60.153m, and total expenditure £57.375m, resulting in a surplus of £2.982m.
- 15. The financial statements were prepared on a going concern basis. The Corporation reviewed the Group's financial forecasts, cash flow projections, and funding arrangements and concluded that Warwickshire College Group has adequate resources to continue operating for the foreseeable future. The external auditors raised no material uncertainty in respect of the Group's ability to continue as a going concern.
- 16. Warwickshire College Group has demonstrated a significant improvement in its financial position and governance arrangements during the review period. Following concerns regarding financial health, the Department for Education issued a Financial Health Notice to Improve in September 2024. Through the implementation of a comprehensive recovery programme, strengthened financial controls, enhanced governance oversight and improved financial performance, the Group successfully addressed the issues identified. In March 2026, the Department for Education formally closed the Notice to Improve and transitioned the Group to post-intervention monitoring arrangements.
- 17. The AC discussed an overview of the finances with Sara-Jane Watkins and Lorna Walters. The issues highlighted in the audit have been addressed, and the substantial clawback has been paid by the College.
- 18. To achieve financial stability, many actions were taken. These included the closing of the Evesham campus, one of the six colleges in the group, which was an under-utilised campus. With Pershore College relatively local, all of the students

were able to continue with their learning, and WCG transports learners from Evesham to Pershore daily. Commercial entities such as garden centres that were loss-making have had their business models refocused, including utilising them more in a learning capacity.

19. The leadership structure has been reformed. There are now Campus Principals for each campus. They are campus-focused and this includes financially. There is a clear framework provided for each team, reporting back to the senior leadership, with finances being reviewed at each campus on a monthly basis.

20. Student numbers across the WCG have increased by 12% in its entirety.

21. There has been a substantial investment in the Moreton Morrell Campus, including improving equine yards, relocating the reception, a new gym, and developing a Sports Academy.

22. The farriery department staff all received a 3% pay award as part of the investment. This is viewed as an investment in the structure for the farriery department for the future, and the AC considered this to be a clear sign of continued support of the department.

23. There are currently 60% of farriery apprentices on the £18,000 legacy learner funding and 40% on the new starts of £25,000 funding. As the number of legacy lower funding apprentices reduces and the proportion of the higher rate apprentices increases, this will to some extent mitigate the smaller number of apprentices entering the programme.

24. The Farriery department is part of the Equine department with regard to budgeting. Overall, the budget is balanced although Farriery is disproportionately expensive. WCG is committed to maintaining the provision and is proud to offer it as part of the land-based training provision. There has also been a specialist uplift in FE for land-based training.

Teaching and Learning

25. Members of the AC observed the teaching of theory during classroom sessions and of practical instruction in trimming, shoemaking, fitting, shoeing, and finishing.

26. The AC observed a theory session in the forge classroom on the topic of spavin; this was observed with all the students present. Throughout the session, the tutors kept the students involved by asking questions and using interactive learning through morbid specimens, PowerPoint, and white board. Kahoot was then used to test the students' learning at the end of the session, which worked well on the students' own phones, once they could log on.

27. It was observed that the PowerPoint used was of a required standard, but with some of the biomechanics information being out of date. It is recommended that lecture materials be updated to prepare the students for the EPA.

28. Practical sessions were held in the gas forge with two members of staff and seven students over four hours. The session outcome was to shoe two feet with

handmade shoes in line with the practical shoeing element of the EPA. This practical session is ideal to stretch and challenge the students. A detailed debrief was given to all students individually on completion. The second session was to make a spavin shoe that was demonstrated following the lesson in the classroom on spavin.

29. On day two the AC observed a practical forging session in the gas forge with all students present. The tutor gave a clear introduction on the topic of spavin shoes on the whiteboard, followed by a demonstration of making a spavin shoe from straight bar stock. This was conducted in a gas fire in a safe manner and PPE was used. Questions were asked throughout the demonstration to engage the students. This was done to a high standard.

30. Throughout the session, the tutors interacted with the apprentices to produce work in line with the standard. The apprentices worked well in the timeframe of the session in a safe and methodical manner. The apprentices' hand tools showed good evidence of maintenance.

31. The College has embraced the use of digital technologies to enhance the apprentice learning experience. OneFile is utilised to manage apprenticeship compliance requirements, including progress reviews, off-the-job training records, and employer engagement activities. Whilst OneFile provides a robust platform for apprenticeship administration and monitoring, the primary submission and assessment of learner work takes place through Google Classroom, providing apprentices with a familiar and accessible digital learning environment.

32. A significant innovation introduced during the current academic year has been the implementation of Google NotebookLM. The platform has been developed as a virtual learning environment to support independent study between college attendance blocks. Apprentices are able to access learning resources remotely through mobile devices and computers, ensuring greater flexibility and accessibility. The system automatically generates revision materials, including quizzes, flashcards, and knowledge checks, enabling learners to test their understanding and consolidate learning outside of formal teaching sessions.

33. The platform also includes innovative functionality allowing content to be converted into podcast-style audio resources, supporting apprentices who prefer auditory learning methods or who may have limited opportunities to access traditional study materials. In addition, the system provides interactive conversational features which allow learners to engage with course content in a more dynamic manner. Teaching staff are able to monitor learner engagement through platform analytics and proactively contact apprentices where engagement levels indicate additional support may be required. The College considers this approach particularly beneficial within an apprenticeship context, where learners spend significant periods away from the college environment and require access to flexible learning opportunities.

34. The teaching team demonstrated a commitment to supporting independent learning and ensuring apprentices remain engaged with their studies between block release periods. The use of digital technologies complements practical workshop

activity and contributes towards the development of learner confidence, knowledge retention, and assessment readiness.

35. The College maintains close working relationships with employers/Approved Training Farriers (ATFs) throughout the apprenticeship journey. Progress reviews, off-the-job training records, and workplace development activities are monitored through established processes, ensuring that learning undertaken in the workplace aligns with programme requirements and apprentice development needs. The College recognises the importance of maintaining strong communication with employers and ensuring that workplace learning effectively reinforces the knowledge and skills developed during college attendance.

36. The Advanced Practitioners and Quality Assurance department follow the IMPACT plan, which is firmly founded in the OFSTED framework when observing teaching and helping lecturers achieve the best outcomes for their learners:

- I Ignite curiosity
- M Model and explain clearly
- P Practice with scaffolding
- A Ask questions and engage to check understanding
- C Consolidate and practice
- T Test and reflect for mastery

37. Staff talk of this being very positive, often describing beginning the sessions with a 'hook'.

38. External partner institutions contributing to the farriery programme include presentations from the FRC, VetSkill in relation to the EPA, Eastlake & Beachell on insurance, and the Avondale Equine Vet Practice.

39. Formal teaching by a veterinary surgeon is not in place on the farriery course, but the Equine Department at the College is next to the Farriery Department and has frequent visits from Avondale Equine Vet Practice, and farriery apprentices are encouraged to observe cases and lameness cases in particular.

40. Business teaching is provided by Pam Bates, a business tutor based at the Leamington Spa campus, either face-to-face or by video.

41. End-of-block reports and action plans are provided to the ATF/employer and apprentice and as the lecturers are also the FPOs these are readily available to them. Reports inform the areas to focus on prior to the next college block, along with regular quizzes that are set every six weeks. These link to reviews and identification of areas for improvement.

42. Google Classroom continues to be used and has been further developed to provide teaching material for the apprentices to access remotely. Lectures, the farriery handbook, quizzes, video demonstrations, and other learning materials are available.

43. Horse handling is taught, and safety and risk management in this area continue to be assessed; risk assessments are available.
44. Overall, the college team worked well in delivering knowledge to the students. This was made clear during the students' interview by the AC with the students being very happy with the tutors and tuition.
45. The college should be congratulated on having a strong, well-motivated farriery team which is well supported by the Head of School, Lorna Walters.

Continuity of Apprentices in Training

46. Farrier meeting minutes indicated that blocks 47S and 46L have been merged as there were only two members of 47S. 47S was originally a block of five apprentices, and three withdrew very early on. After a few blocks, it was considered that merging with the block six months ahead would enable the apprentices to benefit from being part of a slightly larger cohort. 46L has now taken the EPA in May, and 47S will be doing so in November. Staff report that this arrangement worked well for apprentices and staff.
47. The College is aware of the need for apprentices to be employed to continue as an apprentice in training, lawfully carry out farriery, and be eligible for public funding. Logging of off-the-job hours is essential to ensuring the continuation of funding, and this is regularly audited.
48. The College checks on employment status at the start of the apprenticeship and throughout, both at College and at the FPO visits. The Apprenticeship Service (AS) portal requires information on the employing ATF training provider, the College, and the apprentice and requires details on PAYE. Staff often have to assist ATFs with the AS as it can be confusing; enrolment days are helping to mitigate for this, and ATFs seem to appreciate the extra help.
49. The staff and College will help to resolve issues between ATFs and apprentices where possible and facilitate changes of ATF when required. With FPO visits being conducted by the lecturers, this provides continuity and is reported to help understanding, reaction times and approachability.
50. At the time of the AC's visit, there are two apprentices who currently have no ATF. For the first 30 days, the apprentice can remain registered as learning but is unable to practice farriery. After 30 days has elapsed, the apprentice is logged as on a 'Break in Learning'. Apprentices in this situation are supported as best they can be by staff and employment services at the College.
51. When an apprentice leaves their ATF and goes straight into employment with another ATF not already affiliated with the College, the normal procedure will commence to ensure that the workplace and new ATF meet all the necessary requirements.

52. When an apprentice returns after a break in learning for any substantial amount of time, the college will assess the apprentice and reintroduce them into a stage of the apprenticeship that is found to be most appropriate.

53. Apprentices must keep their Off The Job Hours (OTJ) record up to date. It is a minimum expectation and requirement that their record will be updated every four weeks. Georgia Giles explained to the AC how she and the work-based team regularly monitor logged hours. If an apprentice does not log for four weeks, the apprentice and ATF are contacted. Should they still not log any hours, support is offered, but the apprentice may be put on a 'break in learning' and will not be able to practice farriery.

54. Georgia Giles is going on maternity leave in the near future; it was explained that the work-based team will continue to monitor and ensure compliance in her absence, and there is adequate capacity for this to happen without compromising the regular audits.

Quality Assurance and Compliance

55. The overall pass rates for the first attempt of the November 2025 EPA were reported by the college as follows in each element (Pass/Number of first-time candidates):

Practical Shoeing	2/5
Unshod Trim	4/5
Written Test	4/5
Professional Discussion	4/5

56. In the most recent EPA (May 2026), the first-attempt apprentices reportedly achieved the following passes in each element:

Practical Shoeing	6/10
Unshod Trim	4/10
Written Test	6/10
Professional Discussion	9/10

57. The number of apprentices taking these assessments is small, making it difficult to draw too many conclusions. It does, however, appear that the theoretical pass rate is higher than the practical elements.

58. The self-assessment report and quality improvement plans (SARQIPs) are prepared at the end of each academic year; the 2025 SAR has been scrutinised by the AC; there was no QIP attached.

59. The College has established quality assurance arrangements designed to support the continuous improvement of teaching, learning, assessment, and apprentice outcomes. Since the previous approval visit, the College has undertaken a significant review of its quality assurance framework, resulting in strengthened governance arrangements, enhanced quality monitoring processes, and increased investment in staff development and teaching excellence.

60. Responsibility for the Farriery programme sits within a clearly defined management structure. The Course Leader reports to the Head of School, who in turn reports to the Campus Principal. As part of a wider organisational review, the College has recently implemented a revised leadership structure intended to increase management capacity and strengthen curriculum oversight. From the 2026/27 academic year, elements of the Head of School's wider portfolio will be redistributed to provide greater focus and support to curriculum areas, including Farriery.
61. The College maintains a dedicated Quality Directorate, led by a Director of Quality and supported by a Head of Quality. During the current academic year, the College has introduced a team of Advanced Practitioners to further strengthen teaching, learning, and assessment practice. These roles provide coaching, mentoring, and developmental support to teaching staff, promoting innovation and the sharing of effective practice across the institution.
62. A revised Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Framework has been introduced, providing staff with a clear and accessible articulation of the College's expectations for high-quality delivery. This has been supported through staff development activities and a visible awareness campaign across campuses. In addition, the College has invested in digital tools, including Teachermatic, to support curriculum planning, resource development, and teaching innovation.
63. Lesson observations now form part of an enhanced quality cycle. Responsibility for observations has been broadened beyond the central quality team to include Heads of School, increasing capacity and enabling more regular developmental feedback. Alongside formal observations, learning walks are undertaken throughout the academic year, focusing on thematic areas identified through self-assessment, student feedback, and organisational priorities. Findings from these activities are used to inform quality improvement actions at both programme and institutional levels.
64. The College has also introduced termly Quality Performance Reviews for each curriculum area. These reviews examine learner outcomes, attendance, progress, quality indicators, improvement actions and are attended by senior leaders including members of the College Executive Team. In addition, a programme of thematic deep dives has been established to provide a more detailed review of specific curriculum areas, campuses, or cross-college themes. These activities provide additional assurance regarding the quality of provision and support the identification of good practice and areas requiring improvement.
65. The Farriery team participates in regular standardisation meetings, ensuring consistency of delivery, assessment practice, and learner experience. The College maintains a positive and constructive working relationship with the EPAO, which has supported staff through standardisation activities and provided valuable external perspectives on assessment requirements and standards.
66. The College monitors learner achievement and progression through its quality assurance framework, including review through Quality Performance Reviews, programme review processes, and standardisation activities. Current EPA pass

rates within Farriery are approximately 50%, which the College recognises is below the level it would aspire to achieve. As a result, the programme team has prioritised EPA readiness, assessment preparation, and practical skills development as key improvement objectives. The College is working closely with the EPAO to better understand assessment outcomes, strengthen standardisation activities, identify common themes arising from EPA performance, and ensure learners are fully prepared for the requirements of assessment.

67. The programme contributes to the College's annual self-assessment cycle through the completion of a Programme Review and Quality Improvement Plan. This feeds into the School Self-Assessment Report and subsequently the overarching College Self-Assessment Report. The College recognises that the current Programme Review and Quality Improvement Plan could be strengthened further. Whilst the documents identify some key priorities, they do not yet consistently demonstrate a fully embedded cycle of evaluation and impact measurement. This was influenced by a period of staffing change and organisational restructuring. The College has identified this as an area for further development and is implementing revised quality planning processes to ensure programme-level self-assessment becomes a more dynamic and evidence-led tool for continuous improvement.

68. Whilst the quality assurance arrangements for classroom and workshop-based delivery are well established, the College recognises that quality assurance arrangements for work-based learning activities, including apprentice progress reviews, are less mature. During the current academic year, the Quality Team has undertaken developmental shadowing activities and is exploring how observations of work-based learning activities can be incorporated into the wider quality assurance framework. This will support a more consistent approach to quality assurance across all aspects of the apprentice journey. (recommendation b)

69. Overall, the College demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement, supported by clear leadership, strengthened quality systems, enhanced scrutiny arrangements, and a culture of reflective practice. The Farriery programme benefits from these arrangements and is well positioned to continue improving the quality of provision and learner outcomes.

70. No OFQUAL reports relevant to farriery have been produced for WCG since the previous visit. The new OFSTED framework is being implemented College-wide and is seen as useful and welcome amongst the staff.

Staff

71. The following staff were in place either within the farriery department or involved with it at the College during the visit on 16th and 17th June 2026:

- a. Sara-Jane Watkins CEO and Principal WCG
- b. Louise Ball Moreton Morrell Principal

c.	Lorna Walters	Head of School
d.	Chris Gately	Director of Quality, Student Experience & Inclusion
e.	Ben Fairhurst	Head of Quality
f.	Ben Hart	Lead Farriery Tutor DipWCF TAQA 3 days per week
g.	Jordan Priestley	Farriery Tutor DipWCF TAQA 2 days per week
h.	Paul Jones	Farriery Tutor AWCF 2 days per week
i.	Martin Reed	Farriery Tutor DipWCF CTLLS A1 1 day per week
j.	Connor Morrison	Farriery Tutor DipWCF TAQA 2 days per week
k.	Diane Blackie	Senior Instructor Technician (Equine)
l.	Katherine Skudra	Head of Student Welfare & Designated Safeguarding Lead and MHFA
m.	Georgia Giles	Work-based Learning Manager
n.	Hugh Robbins	Employer Services
o.	Vicky Hewitt	Dyslexia Specialist and Exam Access Arrangements
p.	Stephanie Nettleton	Library Manager

72. All farriery tutors have appropriate professional qualifications and assessment qualifications.

73. The AC reviewed staffing arrangements supporting the Farriery apprenticeship provision and found that the programme is delivered by a team of experienced and professionally qualified staff with a strong understanding of both the occupation and apprenticeship delivery requirements. Staff demonstrated a clear commitment to learner success and continuous professional development.

74. The College maintains comprehensive records of staff qualifications, professional development activity, and mandatory training. Evidence reviewed by the Approvals Committee confirmed that staff undertake a range of continuing professional development activities, including mandatory compliance training, curriculum-specific development, attendance at team training events, and participation in wider College professional development activities. Staff development activity is recorded through the College's central systems. The AC considered the CPD requirements of the staff to satisfy the FRC CPD policy.

75. The College has invested significantly in improving teaching and learning by introducing Advanced Practitioners. These specialist roles provide coaching, mentoring, and developmental support to teaching staff and help strengthen teaching, learning, and assessment practice across the College. Staff reported positively on the support available, and examples were provided of how this investment has supported curriculum development, digital innovation, and the sharing of effective practice.

76. Since the previous approval period, the College has revised its approach to workplace monitoring and employer engagement. The traditional Field Placement Officer role has been phased out, with responsibility for progress reviews, workplace assessment and employer liaison now sitting directly with Lecturers/Assessors. Staff reported that this model has strengthened communication between curriculum teams and employers by reducing handovers and creating a more direct relationship between those delivering training and those

supporting apprentices in the workplace. The approach also provides Lecturers/Assessors with a more complete understanding of apprentices' progress and employers' requirements.

77. The AC found staff to be positive about the revised model and considered it to have the potential to enhance the integration of on and off the job learning. However, as responsibility for workplace engagement now sits directly with curriculum staff, the College should continue to monitor workloads and resource allocation to ensure the model remains sustainable and continues to provide sufficient capacity to support both employer engagement and high-quality curriculum delivery.

78. The College utilises a combination of permanent, fractional, and sessional staff to support the delivery of the Farriery programme. This flexible staffing model enables the College to respond to fluctuations in learner numbers and maintain continuity of provision where staffing gaps arise. It also provides apprentices with access to staff who continue to work in the farriery industry, ensuring that teaching remains current, relevant, and informed by contemporary industry practice.

79. Senior leaders demonstrated a clear understanding of the strengths, challenges, and future development priorities of the Farriery provision. Discussions with managers evidenced appropriate oversight of curriculum performance, staffing, learner outcomes, and quality improvement activities. The College's investment in staff development, combined with the teaching team's occupational expertise, provides a strong foundation for the continued development of the programme.

Resources

80. Staff-to-apprentice ratios for practical lessons met or exceeded college set requirements: they were observed to be no greater than 1:4 for shoeing horses and 1:8 for shoemaking. This required two tutors to be available for shoeing with the seven apprentices in group 47L on Block 6 seen during this visit.

81. Tutors and apprentices both reported good availability of horses, which were said to be well-behaved. The horses observed by the AC were well-behaved. College horses are reliably available, well-behaved, and have good feet and are often used for EPA practical assessments. Outside horses are brought in to be trimmed and shod by the apprentices in order to increase the numbers of horses and ponies available for training and formative assessments.

82. The college has a good stock of nails, straight bar metal and machine-made shoes.

83. The working environment is kept clean and tidy in the forge and shoeing areas.

84. First aid kits and eyewashes were available and all up to date, as were fire extinguishers.

85. Adequate teaching and demonstration rooms were available.

86. The college has an ongoing anvil 'maintenance repair programme' which was evident on some of the anvils being used. At the time of the visit, there were anvils requiring maintenance which the college is aware of, and diligence is required to make sure they remain safe for use at all times.
87. Some of the gas fires had doors that were warped and the fire linings cracked. There is a refurbishment schedule for the fires, and the condition is monitored to ensure good working order. The forges were last serviced late August 2025 and are due to be serviced again in the summer break where appropriate. There are spare forges; should one be out of order for any reason it is swapped from the spares.
88. The coke forge is in full working order now and is in use almost entirely by the Blacksmithing course. Farriery apprentices do not usually use this forge now, mainly using the Farriery centre with the gas forges.
89. The library is set in a converted indoor riding school and provides a good size, well-lit, and very pleasant study area. The AC met with Stephanie Nettleton, Library Manager, who regularly monitors all farriery texts. Many texts are available online as e-books, these being available to apprentices remotely as well as when in college.
90. The staff have made and keep up to date a recommended reading list. This is shared with the library staff who will purchase books as necessary, this includes ensuring up-to-date versions are made available. Older versions are also stocked, including historical books for those who may be interested and for when the newer versions may already be in use.
91. Many of the popular farriery textbooks need to be requested at the library front desk; this is because several copies of these have gone missing. To ensure they remain available as a resource for all the policy is that they are requested.
92. The College has a subscription to many journals, plus the British Library online, so most texts and books can be sourced if they are not held in hard copy.
93. The AC was given a tour of the accommodation by Paul March of Residential Services. The AC was also shown the facilities available to the apprentices when on campus.
94. The apprentices in this block were all over 18 years of age. They are provided with accommodation of individual rooms with en-suite bathrooms. There are communal kitchen areas should the apprentices want to cook for themselves.
95. Female and male apprentices stay in this accommodation, but should a female apprentice wish to stay in female-only accommodation this can be easily facilitated.
96. Under-18 apprentices are accommodated in under-18 housing for safeguarding purposes.

97. There are members of the residential teams onsite at all times. They are usually available in the residential office until approximately 11 pm and by phone at any time after that.
98. Farriers are given a residential induction on their first attendance, with updates to rules and regulations being given as and when necessary. There have been no reported issues with farriery apprentices, and the residential team reported behaviour to be good.
99. The College has a refectory serving different types of food. It is operated by a third-party company and is closed over the summer holiday period unless there is a camp with large numbers that requires it. Whilst there are no apprentices for quite some time over the summer, should there be any apprentices coming to college during that period the refectory will not be available.
100. Apprentices appreciated that it was now an option to take accommodation either with or without a meal card option. Without a meal card is cheaper for a week's stay, but apprentices can still pay for food if they want it, with the option to travel to local shops for food if they prefer.
101. The AC was shown the gym that has recently been created. It is a large, high-quality space that is still developing with more gym equipment being added in the coming months.
102. The AC was shown the bar and social room area. It has two pool tables, many sofas, and a table tennis table. The bar is open in term times only, but the social room is open whenever students are in College.

Student Welfare

103. The AC met with Katherine Skudra, Head of Student Welfare & Designated Safeguarding Lead and MHFA.
104. Katherine is involved in face-to-face and/or online training for the lecturers. All staff have up-to-date safeguarding training, which is refreshed online every two years with managers ensuring all staff comply.
105. The College has established comprehensive arrangements to support apprentice welfare, personal development, and wellbeing. These arrangements go beyond statutory requirements, providing apprentices with access to a broad range of support services that promote both academic success and personal well-being throughout their apprenticeship journey.
106. A wide range of student support services is available to apprentices, including personal counselling, mental health and wellbeing support, one-to-one guidance, learning support and information, advice and guidance (IAG) services. Apprentices are introduced to these services during induction and are reminded of the support available through progress reviews, tutorial activity and ongoing discussions with tutors and support staff. Staff demonstrated good awareness of the available

support mechanisms and were able to make referrals where additional intervention may be beneficial.

107. The College has adapted its support services to meet the needs of apprentices, recognising that they spend significant periods away from campus. Support can therefore be provided remotely where appropriate, alongside face-to-face provision during block release periods. Twilight and evening support arrangements are available to ensure apprentices attending college during intensive delivery periods can access services outside normal teaching hours. Welfare support is often delivered discreetly to minimise disruption to learning and encourage engagement from apprentices who may be reluctant to seek support publicly.

108. A coordinated approach to learner support is facilitated by the College's student management systems, enabling relevant staff to access information on support interventions and ensuring that appropriate support strategies are consistently implemented throughout the apprentice journey. This promotes effective communication between curriculum, welfare and support teams whilst ensuring apprentices receive timely and coordinated assistance.

109. The College has clear expectations regarding apprentice conduct and behaviour, supported by a comprehensive Student Code of Conduct and associated policies. These expectations are communicated during induction and reinforced throughout the programme. Where behavioural concerns arise, the Student Welfare Team works proactively with curriculum staff to provide support and intervention, including, where appropriate, attending teaching sessions to reinforce expectations and promote positive behaviours. During observations undertaken by the AC, apprentices were found to be respectful, professional, and engaged in their learning, demonstrating positive relationships with both staff and peers.

110. The College maintains a formal complaints procedure, which is publicly available on the College website and the student intranet. Apprentices are made aware of how to raise concerns or complaints and can access support from tutors, welfare staff, and other designated contacts should they require assistance. The complaints process is supported by established procedures for investigation, escalation, and resolution, providing assurance that concerns are managed fairly and consistently.

111. Health and safety forms an integral component of the apprentice induction process. Apprentices are required to complete a Health and Safety Passport to ensure they understand key safety requirements and are appropriately prepared to work with specialist equipment and in potentially hazardous environments. This provides an important foundation for safe working practices within both the college and workplace settings.

112. Apprentices receive a comprehensive induction guide outlining key information on apprenticeship delivery, support services, student expectations, and college procedures. Whilst not specific to Farriery, the guide provides a useful overview of the broader apprenticeship experience and the support available to apprentices as students of the College. This is supplemented by a dedicated Farriery Student Handbook, which provides programme-specific information including curriculum

content, block release schedules, key dates, and expectations.

113. Moreton Morrell has a nurse available on campus who can triage any health concerns. The local doctors' surgery is available to apprentices should it be required.

114. A counselling service is available at the Moreton Morrell campus.

115. Apprentices are given a reminder about how to access support, in particular around mental health issues, at the beginning of every block.

116. Across the WCG wide, there has been a reasonable uplift in the safeguarding and counselling requirements over the past two years.

117. Farriery apprentices can raise any concerns with farriery tutors, either when in College or when acting as FPO's, or anyone else in the College. Staff enter concerns online using My Concern. Any reports are picked up and triaged for appropriate action with Katherine seeing every concern raised.

118. There are posters with QR codes around the campus signposting learners to the safeguarding team; the AC saw many examples of these.

119. The Prevent policy was made available to the AC. Katherine explained that the WCG currently uses WRAP training from the DfE but that this might be superseded in the near future for Prevent training created in-house.

120. The Work Based Learning (WBL) Scheme of Work for Farriery is the title of the farriery handbook. The document outlines in some detail the behaviours and resources required, the gateway, and how the subject will be assessed, as well as equality and diversity, British values, and employability skills including personal development and social skills.

121. The Student Behaviour Policy and the Apprenticeship Induction Handbook were provided to the AC.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

122. The College is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of its provision. A comprehensive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is in place and is publicly available through the College website. The policy is supported by a range of operational procedures and staff development activities designed to ensure that equality of opportunity is embedded throughout the learner experience.

123. The AC met with Vicky Hewitt, Dyslexia Specialist and Exam Access Arrangements. Apprentices are given a disclosure form at enrolment asking if extra exam provisions or requirements have been provided at school. Some apprentices do not disclose any requirements at this time; however, some often come forward to their tutors during the apprenticeship. Tutors are also able to refer an apprentice

to learning support for screening if they feel an apprentice would benefit from exam provisions.

124. The EPAO (Vetskill) require evidence in advance from the College regarding 'normal way of working'. The College gathers this evidence, some of which is time limited.

125. Exam provisions currently accommodated include 25% extra time, reading aloud (which includes the requirement for a separate room), readers and scribes, computer spell check, reading pens, coloured reading rulers, coloured overlays, rest breaks and the use of word processors with spell check either enabled or disabled. Apprentices may use one or any combination of these normal ways of working in their exam with permission from the EPAO.

126. Approximately 25% of enrolled apprentices have exam provisions throughout the farriery department. At the time of the AC's visit, there are 59 apprentices enrolled with the College.

127. Personalised Learning Grids (PLGs) are used to identify student learning requirements and strategies used to optimise learning, including reasonable adjustments for assessments, for each apprentice. These are based on disclosure and testing and shared with all staff involved with the learner for a range of special educational needs (SEN), with dyslexia, autism, and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) being most common.

128. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into curriculum delivery through lesson planning and teaching activities. Teaching staff are required to consider opportunities to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion within learning sessions, and lesson planning documentation includes specific reference to these themes. Observations and discussions with staff demonstrated a clear commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment in which apprentices are treated with dignity and respect and encouraged to value differing perspectives and experiences.

129. The College has established robust arrangements for identifying and supporting apprentices with additional learning needs. All apprentices undertake a comprehensive initial assessment and interview process at the commencement of their programme. This enables support requirements to be identified at an early stage and appropriate interventions to be implemented. Group profiles are maintained for each cohort, providing teaching staff with information regarding individual learning needs, reasonable adjustments, and support strategies. This ensures that learning activities can be adapted appropriately and that apprentices are able to access the support required to achieve their full potential.

130. Where additional learning support is required, apprentices have access to specialist support services and interventions. Information regarding support requirements is shared appropriately with relevant staff, ensuring a coordinated and consistent approach across the apprentice journey. The College's arrangements for identifying, recording, and responding to learning support needs were found to be well established and effectively implemented.

131. Whilst the College provides English and Mathematics support for apprentices where required, this is not typically a significant feature of the Farriery programme due to the requirement for apprentices to hold the necessary English and Mathematics qualifications prior to enrolment. Nevertheless, literacy and numeracy development are embedded throughout teaching and learning activities, ensuring apprentices continue to develop the communication, calculation, and professional skills required within the occupation.
132. The promotion of British Values forms part of the College's wider approach to personal development and equality of opportunity. British Values are promoted throughout the campus environment through displays, learning resources, and information available on the College website. Apprentices demonstrated a basic awareness of British Values and were able to identify several of the key principles when questioned. Further opportunities exist to embed these concepts more consistently within the curriculum and to strengthen learners' understanding of their relevance to professional practice and wider society.
133. The College demonstrated a clear commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all apprentices and has established effective systems to identify, support, and monitor learners requiring additional assistance. Equality, diversity, inclusion, and British Values are embedded within both the curriculum and wider college culture and contribute positively to the apprentice experience.
134. All staff have to take an online Equality and Diversity training module and refresher training every three years. There is a tutorial programme for all full-time students, and the farriery tutors are made aware of the programme of Equality & Diversity events.

Approved Training Farriers (ATFs) (Employers)

135. The College provided a list of all the ATFs currently working with them. The list detailed the apprentice(s) employed by the ATF and the group the apprentice was in. The AC were given telephone numbers for three ATFs who had been asked to expect a call. The AC spoke to two of those ATFs. The feedback was positive, with ATFs appreciating the access they have to the College staff for any discussions or help they may feel is required. The fact that College lecturers are the FPOs was considered very positive.
136. Warwickshire College organises an annual face-to-face day course for their ATFs, which increases engagement and provides training and CPD opportunities and is commended.
137. As part of the enrolment process and FPO visits, the College ensures appropriate insurance is in place and carries out a range of health and safety checks when an apprentice starts with an ATF. An employment contract must always be in place, and this is one of the questions at each visit, the answer being recorded on Onefile.
138. Regular monitoring visits are carried out at the same time as the work-based learning progress reviews by the FPOs. Evidence of these was seen by the AC on

the Onefile system. Where the lecturers are the FPOs, this has the added benefit of the teaching staff understanding the apprentices' work situation well.

139. End of block reports and action plans are shared between apprentices, ATFs, and lecturers who are also the FPOs. Training concerns identified during college attendance are discussed with ATFs and apprentices by the farriery tutors. The current arrangement of lecturers being the FPOs provides good continuity in this area.
140. A report and discussion are provided around the Gateway for the employing ATF, although the ATF has the final decision on whether the apprentice passes the Gateway and takes the EPA. It is usually a joint decision between the apprentice, the College and ATF. The ATF is responsible for any re-sit or re-take fees payable to the EPAO should the apprentice not be successful in the EPA at the first time of asking.
141. Despite the ATF as the employer being liable for these costs, the level of expense appeared to be a source of anxiety for apprentices in the College at the time of the AC's visit.
142. In discussion with one member of staff it was mentioned that there are some very good ATFs and some not so good. The College does have the ability to choose not to work with ATFs it deems to be ineffective. The reality is that because of the smaller numbers coming through this might not always be the case. It is recommended that this failsafe to help protect the profession from the very small number of poor employers is still utilised to protect the integrity of the employment, training and outcomes for apprentices.

Relationship with the FRC

143. The College has a data sharing agreement (DSA) with the FRC. It was explained to the AC that it has just been updated following very minor changes.
144. The College is required to enrol apprentices with the FRC at the commencement of the apprenticeship in order that the apprentice may lawfully practise farriery while in training, and is also required to notify the FRC of any changes affecting ATFs and Apprentices. These may include ATFs with whom the training provider is no longer content to work, and apprentices who may have left training, re-joined training, or moved from one employer to another. Such notifications are required in a weekly update, which is provided to the FRC each Friday as part of the data sharing agreement.
145. The College uses software called 'E-Sign Up' at induction, which has drastically reduced the amount of paperwork and, importantly, has reduced the margin of error at inductions. Most apprentices are signed up at an induction day with their ATF present; this enables all of the information to be gathered efficiently, and this is shared with the FRC as part of that process.
146. A system for sharing EPA results exists between the EPAO and Warwickshire College. Approximately 48 hours after the information has been shared, the EPAO

then shares the information with the FRC. The College also shares the information with the FRC in this time, ensuring the FRC is provided with accurate information.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

147. The AC visited Warwickshire College on 16th and 17th June 2026 to consider the continued suitability of the College to deliver Farrier Apprenticeship training.

148. During its visit on 16th and 17th June 2026, the AC was made welcome and was able to access the staff, students, facilities, and the records required to make an assessment in relation to the FRC Procedures for Approvals, which includes, in relation to this visit, the procedures for the Approval of Courses of Training and Institutions under Section 11(1) (a) and (d) of the Farriers Registration Act 1975.

149. The recommendations made following the visit in 2024 have received attention. These are as outlined in the section on Historical Background (at 12 above).

150. The AC noted several areas to be commended:

- a) The quick and robust turnaround in the financial situation of the WCG has resulted in better outcomes for students and staff alike. The senior management team at the College should be commended for this.
- b) The College should be congratulated on having a strong, well-motivated farriery team, which is well supported by the Head of School, Lorna Walters.
- c) The investment in the Moreton Morrell campus is a very positive development, with the facilities available to apprentices in their own time being of good quality and creating a positive environment.
- d) The ATF day recently held was reported as being very useful and the continued effort to communicate and develop relationships with ATFs as employers is to be commended.

151. Following its visit to Warwickshire College on 16th and 17th June 2026, it was recommended that:

- a) The College should strengthen the effectiveness of the Programme Review, Self-Assessment Report (SAR), and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to ensure they operate as fully integrated quality improvement tools. Future reviews should place greater emphasis on evaluative judgements, the use of performance and achievement data, clear identification of strengths and areas for improvement, and robust monitoring of actions to demonstrate measurable impact over time.
- b) To enhance the quality assurance of work-based learning activities, including apprentice progress reviews, it is recommended that the College continues and expands the developmental shadowing activities initiated by the Quality Team. Additionally, incorporating observations of work-based learning into the broader quality assurance framework should be prioritised. This approach will ensure a more consistent and comprehensive quality assurance process throughout the

entire apprentice journey.

- c) It is recommended that lecture materials be updated and reviewed regularly to better prepare the apprentices for the EPA.
- d) WCG at Morton Morrell continues to be approved by the FRC to deliver farriery apprenticeship training for two years until 2028 in accordance with FRC policy.