

# New College Stamford

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130760

**Name of lead inspector:** Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 20 May 2011

**Type of provider:** General Further Education College

**Address:** Drift Road  
Stamford  
Lincolnshire  
PE9 1XA

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## Information about the provider

1. New College Stamford is a small general further education college that serves a mainly rural area and is situated at the southernmost point of Lincolnshire. The college is located within a mile of three other county boundaries and recruits around half of its full-time learners from Peterborough, Rutland, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. The college's core business is vocational education with the majority of its further education provision funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). The college now offers provision in all 15 subject areas. In the last two years it has introduced employer responsive programmes in Train to Gain and apprenticeships. From September 2010, the college outsourced its Train to Gain provision through a sub-contracted partnership arrangement.
2. The majority of learners are aged 16 to 18 and study on full-time programmes. Around 5% of all learners study on entry level programmes, around 13% at foundation level, 31% at intermediate level and 26% at advanced level, with the remainder on programmes classified as 'other' level. The largest number of enrolments across the college is in preparation for life and work, visual and performing arts and media and health, public services and care.
3. In 2009, the proportion of school leavers with five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A\* to C in Lincolnshire was 59%, above the national average. Around 18% of learners are from a minority ethnic background, above that of the local population. Since the previous inspection, a new building has been erected on the college's main site to re-house reception and learner services. A new principal was appointed this academic year.
4. The college's mission is, "To provide the means for our learners to achieve their full potential for progression and employability to support the local and national economy for the future".
5. The college provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Gladstone District Community Association
  - Stamford Academy
  - The Gleed Girls' Applied Learning & Technology College
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
  - Aspire, Achieve, Advance Ltd (3A's)
  - Mitre Group

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10</b>
<p><b>Provision for young learners:</b> 14 to16</p> <p>Further education (16 to18)</p>	<p>385 part-time learners</p> <p>1,831 full-time learners 69 part-time learners</p>
<p><b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)</p>	<p>230 full-time learners 654 part-time learners</p>
<p><b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships</p>	<p>1,206 learners 156 apprentices</p>

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Sport	2
Performing arts and media	3
Skills for life and work	1

## Overall effectiveness

7. New College Stamford remains a good college which continues to improve its provision. It has managed its growth in learner numbers successfully while maintaining high levels of learner achievement. Strong financial management has enabled the college to sustain and build on a welcoming and inclusive environment in which learners feel extremely safe and enjoy their education. Learners display positive attitudes to their studies and a high proportion take advantage of the very wide range of opportunities available to take on extra responsibilities or contribute to the local Stamford community, through activities such as volunteering. As a result, many learners demonstrate high levels of maturity and good interpersonal skills, all of which prepares them well for life after college.
8. Most teaching is very effective in ensuring learners make good progress and adds to their enjoyment at college. In a minority of cases however learners' progress is hindered by less effective teaching and/or assessment which is not always planned well enough to meet learners' individual needs. Learners

appreciate the broad and increasing selection of academic, vocational and enrichment subjects available to them. The college recognises that its employer responsive provision and links with employers more broadly are less well established. The previous excellent levels of care and support are maintained which helps many learners, including young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable, to complete their studies successfully and progress towards their chosen career paths.

9. The college is well led and managed. Leaders, managers and the governing body are enthusiastic and committed to improving all aspects of the college's work. Where quality improvement procedures are strong, swift improvement is more evident, as seen in the monitoring of teaching and learning. However, where the analysis, monitoring, and reporting is less rigorous, such as in the college's employer responsive provision and in a few subject self-assessment reports and evaluations, improvement is less marked or more difficult to measure.

## Main findings

- A high proportion of learners are successful in achieving their main qualifications, particularly on foundation and advanced level programmes. Standards of learners' work are good. Most learners make better than expected progress against their starting points, notably on GCE A-level programmes and on the vast majority of advanced vocational courses. Learners enjoy college life and their attendance is high.
- The college analyses the performance by different groups on its learner responsive provision, although it does not analyse or report sufficiently on this in its employer responsive provision. Learners achieve satisfactorily on employer responsive programmes, with an increasing proportion gaining their qualification in the time allocated.
- Learners feel exceptionally safe and show a strong understanding of what constitutes safe working practices. Learners develop good levels of literacy and numeracy which contribute positively to their future economic well-being. Learners benefit greatly from the extensive array of opportunities made available to take on additional responsibilities or support the local community. The evaluation of broader outcomes is not comprehensive.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned well and enable most learners to make good progress and achieve well. In the most effective lessons an extensive variety of activities motivates and engages learners. However, the quality of teaching does vary and in a small minority of lessons learners are not always challenged sufficiently.
- Assessment practice is good. Most teachers use assessment well to check learners' knowledge and understanding and to monitor progress. However, assessment practice is not consistent across the college and feedback does not always inform learners clearly what they need to do to improve further.
- The range of provision, including extra curricular activity, is broad. Courses offered are responsive to local priorities and learners' needs. Opportunities for

progression are good with many learners successfully achieving places in higher education, further education or full-time employment on completing their studies.

- Partnership working with local schools and communities is good. Work experience is well-organised and purposeful where it is linked to course requirements. Employer and community links, where used for work experience, are good, but given the increased number of vocational courses, employer links across the college and within the relatively new employer responsive provision are less well developed.
- Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Information, advice and guidance for prospective and on-course learners are particularly well-organised, welcoming and effective. Support for learners, particularly vulnerable groups, with regards to coursework, welfare and travel concerns is very good. The tutorial programme is good and contributes to learners' personal and social development.
- Leadership and management are good. Challenging targets have been used to raise learners' achievements successfully. However, a few curriculum grades remain persistently satisfactory. Governance is good. Learner engagement and involvement in college life is managed well. Learners' views are collected from a wide range of sources and used well to help improve the provision.
- Quality assurance arrangements for learner responsive provision are comprehensive and in most cases implemented well. Self-assessment reports are not sufficiently evaluative. Professional development is targeted well and arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning are well managed, comprehensive and effective.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well. Arrangements for learner responsive provision are generally good and most achievement gaps are minimal. However, the detail of some analysis, evaluation and reporting, particularly, but not exclusively, on employer responsive, is insufficient. Diversity is widely celebrated and learners demonstrate a good awareness and appreciation of other equality strands including others' cultures and beliefs.
- Arrangements to manage work-based learning are under-developed. While there is a strong focus on compliance and accountability, not enough is done to assure the quality of the franchised work-based learning provision.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Recruitment checks have been completed on all college staff and detailed policies and procedures are in place. College staff have received appropriate safeguarding training and understand their responsibilities. Governors monitor the implementation of safeguarding arrangements well and review them as required.

### **What does New College Stamford need to do to improve further?**

- Enhance the arrangements for quality assuring employer responsive provision so learners' outcomes improve by analysing learner outcomes for all groups in more detail; improving the observation of teaching, assessment and reviews in

the workplace; and ensuring self-assessment is more comprehensive in this area.

- Ensure that the college's evaluation of all aspects of its provision, including the performance of different groups and within broader outcomes is suitably rigorous so that self-assessments and other reports are completed more fully and that the information is used more sharply to focus actions for improvement.
- Further improve the quality and consistency of teaching, assessment and tutorials to ensure learners make good progress in all sessions. Devise learning activities that are closely matched to individual needs and ability levels and provide more detailed feedback that informs learners exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Extend links with employers across the college to give learners more opportunity to gain work experience and to enable employers to contribute more systematically to curriculum development.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What learners like:**

- the friendly and safe environment
- helpful, supportive and caring staff
- the way the college listens and responds to their views
- the good teaching that helps them make progress
- the range of courses and activities offered
- work-placements in areas where they are available
- gaining new skills.

#### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- the availability of computers
- the social space and the availability of seating
- opportunities for work experience in some subjects
- quality of resources in a minority of areas
- clarity of assessments, assignment briefs and feedback in a few subjects.

### **Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What employers like:**

- company based trainers and assessors
- productive working relationships
- the frequency of assessment
- the help and advice provided.

**What employers would like to see improved:**

- a reduction in the amount of paperwork that is completed
- consultation when changes are made
- opportunities to become involved with the college.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. The college has maintained high long course success rates through a period of marked growth in learner recruitment. A culture of continuous improvement is promoted actively by senior managers and staff morale is high. Good progress has been made against the issues raised at the previous inspection. Quality improvement arrangements are effective and have brought about many sustained improvements including greater consistency in learner achievement across subject areas. In a number of areas, however, improvements are less marked and the quality of analysis, monitoring and evaluation are not always sharp or detailed enough. The self-assessment process is very inclusive and the self-assessment report is largely accurate. Targets by which to drive and measure improvements in a few areas are not precise enough. Financial management is strong and monitored very effectively by the governing body.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

11. Outcomes for learners are good. A high proportion of learners gain their primary qualifications, particularly on foundation and advanced level programmes. On employer responsive programmes, learners achieve satisfactorily with an increasing proportion gaining their qualification in the planned time. The standard of learners' work is good and in several cases very good. Learners demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and many make better than expected progress against their starting points, notably on A-level programmes and on the vast majority of advanced vocational courses. The achievement of high grades varies by qualification. It is high on GCSE, vocational advanced level programmes and A-level programmes but low on several AS-level programmes. Learners enjoy their studies very much and this is reflected in their consistently high levels of attendance.
12. The college analyses the performance by different groups of learners, although this is not always analysed or reported in sufficient detail, particularly through the self-assessment report. The college identifies accurately that most groups of learners by ethnicity, gender and disability perform well when compared to their peers. However, it did not analyse or report sufficiently on high grades or employer responsive provision in this regard, where differences in outcomes were lower for some groups in 2009/10. The small numbers of looked after children, although not reported routinely, achieve very well.
13. Learners' develop good levels of literacy and numeracy and many are successful in gaining qualifications in key or functional skills. This, along with the development of good social and team-building skills prepares them very effectively for their future economic well-being. On leaving the college, a high proportion of learners progress successfully to their first choice of further

education, higher education or full-time employment. All groups of learners feel very safe within the college environment. Learners are aware of safe working practices and the vast majority apply them with due diligence.

14. A wide and increasing range of healthy initiatives are in place to help promote learners' well-being. Learners are aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are able to make informed choices as a result. Opportunities for learners to take on additional roles and responsibilities both within the college and in the local community are extensive. For example, many learners volunteer for community-related projects, support local festivals, or act as advocates to sustain an effective learner voice in the college. Learners' awareness and involvement in the promotion of sustainability is good. The college does not evaluate, monitor or report the impact of enrichment activities, such as routinely monitoring learner take up of sport-related activities, as effectively as it could. As a result, opportunities are missed to target improvement more effectively or to celebrate areas of particular success.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

15. Teaching and learning are good. Many teachers use a range of teaching methods to motivate and engage learners in lessons. Information learning technology (ILT), including the virtual learning environment, is used confidently by many staff to enhance learning. Learners generally enjoy their lessons and most make good progress. The quality of teaching varies and the very best teaching enables learners to make excellent progress and achieve very well. The most successful lessons take full account of learners' individual needs and ability levels and the work set by teachers ensures learners are challenged by the enjoyable activities they complete. In the minority of less effective lessons, although satisfactory overall, the complexity of the work set, or the pace of the lesson, does not sufficiently challenge learners to make the progress of which they are capable. A few lessons are too teacher led and do not engage learners in meaningful activity.
16. Teachers know their learners well and generally provide good personal support. Working relationships between learners and teachers are good. Staff are well qualified and experienced and use their skills effectively to enhance learning. Equality and diversity are promoted well with many teachers making good use of non-stereotypical examples to reinforce learning. Additional learning support is highly effective and enables learners identified with additional support needs to make good progress and achieve well. Learning support assistants work well with teachers to support learning in the classroom and learners value the help they provide.
17. Assessment practice is good overall but varies across the college. In the most effective assessment practice teachers provide detailed feedback to learners that clearly inform them what needs to be done to improve. However, not all practice is this effective and a minority of teachers do not provide sufficiently detailed feedback or use assessment sufficiently well to check learners'

knowledge and understanding. Assessment in the workplace, by contracted assessors, is frequent and enables many learners on employer responsive provision to make rapid progress and achieve qualifications quickly.

18. Arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are comprehensive. Judgements made by internal observers are accurate. The information collected during lesson observations is used well to inform training and development activity. Mentoring and buddy schemes are used well to support teachers to improve their practice. The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve. The quality of monitoring of teaching, training and learning in the workplace is not as effective as that completed in the college.
19. Courses are planned well to meet local and regional priorities and to support learners' progression onto further studies or employment. A wide range of course levels are offered providing multiple start points for different ability learners and good progression opportunities. Internal progression between levels is generally good, although the proportion of learners progressing between AS and A level is relatively low, but improving. Cross-college enrichment activities include a broad range of sports clubs and teams, visits to universities and charity fund-raising. Learners benefit from good curriculum-related enrichment activities which enhance their skills and knowledge and provide enjoyable social interaction, such as trips for assignment research, guest speakers and skills seminars and competitions.
20. Partnerships with local schools are strong. They include a formal alliance with local state and independent schools, which contributes well towards curriculum development and sharing of resources. The process to vet work placements is well organised and includes a comprehensive risk assessment. Good work experience is gained by learners from across the college with several community groups, schools and employers. However, links with employers are under-developed, especially for the increasing range of vocational courses and in work-based provision.
21. Care, guidance and support remain outstanding and contribute very effectively to learners' personal development, confidence and other broader outcomes. Information, advice and guidance for prospective and on-course learners is extremely well-organised, welcoming and effective. The weekly student bulletin and 'Friday Facts' are well-used communication tools. The college's subsidised bus services provide very good access for learners from a wide, mostly rural, regional area, enabling many to pursue education who may otherwise choose not to. Particularly good support and care is given to learners whose circumstances such as homelessness or family, financial or health issues make them vulnerable. This enables them to continue their studies. The small welfare, advice and guidance team has developed its range of knowledge and skills rapidly to provide excellent support and information across a wide range of personal and welfare issues. This is well-promoted on-campus and is well used.

22. The good course-related and pastoral support provided by the team of 14 student advisors is valued highly by learners. Full-time learners benefit from a comprehensive, well-structured tutorial programme which includes mandatory topics, such as equality and diversity, cyber-bullying, safeguarding, healthy living and transition into work. While most tutorial sessions engage learners actively and stimulate learners' interest through high quality electronic presentations, quizzes and activities, a few do not. In these cases, the sessions do not always contextualise the topics as well as they could do in order to relate to different learners' lives and careers. Attendance at tutorials is high.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

23. Leadership and management are good. Recruitment has increased markedly and success rates have improved and are high. Managers set challenging targets and these are used successfully to monitor and improve success rates. Most staff understand the process used to set targets. Learner achievement data is accurate and accessible and is used well to identify under-performing courses. The wider use of targets to inform course and curriculum area self-assessment is less well developed. Overall, curriculum management is good. A few curriculum areas, however, have remained satisfactory.
24. The college is between strategic plans. The previous 2008/12 plan sets out the college's ambitions clearly but the reporting of progress against strategic and annual objectives is insufficiently sharp. A new strategic plan is nearly completed that has much sharper and easier to measure objectives and that addresses the new challenges facing the college more clearly. Staff understand the reasons for the change and the imminent management restructure. Communications in the college are good. Staff are appropriately qualified and have relevant experience. They are inducted well and appraisal is appropriately managed. Arrangements to develop staff professionally are very effective.
25. The governing body are experienced and well informed. Governors were involved fully in the development of the new strategic plan and monitor college performance closely. They supply a good level of challenge to managers and use their experience well to inform decisions. A few of the reports they receive are insufficiently evaluative which means they are not always in a position to challenge as effectively as they could.
26. Arrangements to ensure learners are appropriately safeguarded and protected are good. Recruitment checks have been completed on all college staff and a single central record is in place. Governors, volunteers and frequent visitors to the college have undergone Criminal Record Bureau checks and a designated senior manager with responsibility for safeguarding is well known to staff. All staff have completed appropriate safeguarding training and know their responsibilities, including for e-safety. Safeguarding is prioritised with well considered policies and procedures in place. Governors monitor safeguarding arrangements well and review them as required. Good links are established with external agencies and the college has established a cross-college safeguarding

working group. Access to the college is controlled well and will be further enhanced when the new entrance is operational. Health and safety is managed effectively.

27. Management arrangements for the promotion of equality and diversity are good. All staff and governors have received relevant training. Policies and procedures are in place and assessed for equality impact. The implementation of the single equality scheme is monitored closely. All committees have a standing agenda item on equality and diversity. Learner responsive data is analysed for differences between different groups of learners and appropriate action is taken when necessary. Not all reporting of equalities is sufficiently comprehensive, for example, employer responsive provision is not analysed or reported in enough detail. The tutorial programme promotes equality and diversity well. Good work is done to monitor and help improve the embedding of equality and diversity in teaching. Learners show a sound awareness and appreciation of other beliefs, religions and sexual orientation. Learners feel exceptionally safe, bullying is rare and the vast majority of learners are highly respectful of their peers.
28. Learner representatives attend the student council along with senior managers and governors, demonstrating the importance attached to this group. Arrangements to collect the views of college learners, including those with learning difficulties, are well developed and lead to improvement. The use of focus groups to follow up the most negative responses is a good feature. Arrangements to consider the views of work-based learners are limited. Learners play a good part in improving provision. For example, they observe the micro-teaching of prospective teachers and learners who are carers have produced a carers' charter. Employer engagement is in its infancy at the college.
29. Quality improvement arrangements are good. Processes are, in most cases, comprehensive and well conceived. The thoroughness with which the reviews at course and curriculum area level are completed is uneven. Most are completed at least satisfactorily but in a few cases the evaluation is limited and the use of targets under-developed. The observation of teaching and learning is well managed and thorough and leads to improvement. The college's self-assessment report is accurate in its grading of the subject areas but it is too descriptive and the extent to which it marshals evidence to support its judgements in many cases is insufficient.
30. The college's strong financial health has enabled it to fund the new building out of reserves. Financial controls are strong. The college takes good steps to procure resources efficiently. Accommodation is well maintained but a few rooms are crowded and sometimes too hot. Classrooms are well equipped. The ratio of computers to learners is good but access can be difficult at peak times. Overall learners' retention and attendance rates continue to be high. The college provides good value for money.

## Subject areas

### Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 3

#### Context

31. The college offers programmes from entry to advanced level in hairdressing, barbering, beauty therapy, media make-up, spa and complementary therapies. At the time of inspection 206 learners were enrolled on a range of full-time and part-time programmes with just over half of all enrolments in beauty therapy. Some 16 learners are following hairdressing apprenticeships. Hairdressing and beauty therapy are managed separately within the college. Both managers are new in post and currently interim following a restructure of the area.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on most programmes are broadly average although high on the NVQ level 1 programmes in 2009/10. Most learners who complete their programmes achieve successfully. Retention rates on the NVQ level 2 in hairdressing and the NVQ level 3 in beauty therapy were low in 2009/10.
- On employer responsive programmes in hairdressing, outcomes, including the proportion of learners who complete their qualifications within their planned end date, are satisfactory.
- Learners develop their practical skills well. Learners' hairdressing skills meet the required level of their NVQ qualification and these learners work confidently when completing highlighting, blow drying and hair colouring. Learners on beauty therapy programmes develop good practical skills particularly at advanced level, where they demonstrate high professional standards and in-depth knowledge when completing hot stone and aromatherapy treatments.
- Learners feel very safe. The robust identity security systems in place ensure access to the area is very secure. Learners are routinely reminded to wear gloves and aprons to protect themselves while carrying out treatments, for example, colouring. However, in a small minority of cases hairdressing learners are not regularly reminded to sterilize their equipment.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Much teaching in beauty therapy is good and often leads to good progress. Where lessons are less effective, in both hairdressing and beauty therapy, teachers do not always plan effectively to take account of individual learning needs and the pace of lessons is too slow. Assessment is timely and fair.
- The range of provision to meet learners' needs and interests is good. Learners benefit from a wide variety of stimulating enrichment activities such as demonstrations from leading manufacturers and prestigious employers which lead to learners being chosen to undertake work experience. For the newly introduced hairdressing employer responsive programmes, courses are not flexible enough to meet all employers' needs.

- Partnership working is satisfactory. Links with employers are developing gradually, although employers are not yet involved routinely in programme planning. Work-based learners in hairdressing receive good practical training in their work placements but employers do not always receive a clear enough training plan to coordinate training in the workplace with that in the college.
- Learners receive good pastoral support and guidance. Learners value highly the college welfare, advice and guidance and the supportive approach of their teachers. The tutorial programme is effective, aiding learners' personal development well. Success rates of those learners who receive additional learning support are broadly average.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-assessment is inclusive but, although accurate in their overarching judgments, self-assessment reports are too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative. Opportunities to share good practice between the areas are often missed. It is too early to judge the full effectiveness of actions taken to bring about improvement but college data indicate higher in-year retention rates, particularly within beauty therapy.
- Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is better in beauty therapy that has a new spa facility. The number of real clients in hairdressing is insufficient, restricting learners' opportunities to extend further their skills and experiences. The college recognises that access for learners and clients with restricted mobility in the present location of studios away from nearby toilets is less than ideal.
- Safeguarding is good and promoted well by the college. Staff and learners demonstrate a good understanding of safe practices and staff have undergone appropriate training. The recording of electrical testing on learners' own equipment is insufficiently robust.

### **What does New College Stamford need to do to improve further?**

- Improve success rates, including on employer responsive provision, by ensuring that the planning of lessons, particularly but not exclusively in hairdressing, takes sufficient account of individual learners' needs so that all learners are suitably challenged and make good progress.
- Improve learners' experience of a real working environment by increasing the number of clients in hairdressing and improving, within budgetary constraints, the ease of accessibility for clients and learners, particularly with restricted mobility, in the hairdressing and beauty therapy salons.
- Increase the flexibility and progression opportunities on employer responsive programmes to meet employers' needs more effectively by further developing and extending employer links.
- Improve arrangements of safeguarding within a minority of aspects in hairdressing by reinforcing best practice in lessons regarding the sterilization of tools. In addition, ensure equipment testing processes are followed systematically when learners use their own equipment in college.

## Sport

## Grade 2

### Context

32. The subject area offers full-time BTEC courses in sport at intermediate and advanced level. Most of the 296 learners enrolled are full-time and aged 16 to 18. All learners complete key or functional skills. Many have access to additional qualifications such as event stewarding. Approximately a quarter of all learners are female and a very small number of learners are of minority ethnic heritage.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are very high on the BTEC first diploma and national certificate in sport. Success rates on the BTEC national diploma in sport and the BTEC national award were broadly average in 2009/10. Inspectors' observations confirmed that many learners make at least good or better progress on their courses and a high proportion achieve high grade passes.
- Learners develop a wide range of specialist skills. In addition to sports performance skills, learners also develop coaching and evaluation skills. They develop good assignment production skills as a result of the specific training they receive. However, opportunities for learners to experience the broader world of sports work through visits and work experiences are underdeveloped.
- Learners feel very safe while in college. Learners adopt safe working practices during practical lessons and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Staff reinforce health and safety issues frequently in lessons and encourage learners to take responsibility for their own safety.
- Learners make a very good contribution to the community and have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Learners benefit greatly from community activities such as contributing to local festivals and working with local schools. They also develop significant understanding of appropriate diet regimes and the negative effects of poor diet and substance misuse in the context of sport.
- Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons are very well planned, and teachers make good use of information and learning technologies. Most learners are stretched through differentiated learning tasks and by teachers making effective use of targeted questioning. Learning resources are well designed and used to very good effect.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Learners are prepared well for assessment tasks and a variety of assessment methods are used, including question and answer, discussions, presentations, multiple unit projects and assignments. Written work meets the assessment criteria and grades awarded meet awarding body requirements. Written feedback on learners' work, however, is not always sufficiently individualised or constructive to aid improvement.
- The range of courses meets the needs and interests of learners well. Advanced level programmes prepare learners well for life after college, either in



preparation for sports courses in higher education or sports and leisure-related employment. Learners take advantage of the wide array of sports enrichment available to them.

- Partnerships are satisfactory. Strong links with schools and community groups enable learners to develop work-related skills in a variety of sports-related contexts, for example, the organisation of an indoor athletics event in conjunction with a local school. Links with employers are not as well developed, which limits the opportunities for learners to get more directly involved in sports-related work.
- Support for learners is good. Initial advice and guidance is very effective in helping learners make well-informed decisions about the relevance of courses, including how the courses would help them progress towards their anticipated career goals. Learners value greatly the quality of support they receive through the duration of their programme.
- Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the department self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Managers and staff meet frequently to discuss learners' progress and how best to plan teaching.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good. Actions to improve provision are successful in many aspects, including the introduction of a new progress monitoring system that helps keep learners on track and to achieve higher grades. However, in a few areas, such as improving retention rates on the national diploma in sport, actions taken have been less effective.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Learning resources are considered carefully and images of athletes of different genders, from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with disabilities are used frequently to raise learners' awareness of diversity and to challenge preconceived ideas or stereotypes.

### **What does New College Stamford need to do to improve further?**

- Raise success rates further, particularly on the BTEC national diploma in sport, by ensuring written feedback is appropriately personalised for learners so they know exactly what they need to do to improve and by clarifying assignment deadlines, so that staff and learners are clear what the requirements are.
- Widen opportunities for learners to experience the sports world of work by working with a more extensive range of sports and leisure-related employers and partners.

## Performing arts and media

## Grade 3

### Context

33. The college offers courses in performing arts and media at intermediate and advanced level. Approximately 200 learners are enrolled on A level, AS level and vocational BTEC courses. Around two thirds of learners are enrolled on vocational courses. The majority of learners are aged 16 to 18 and study full time at advanced level. Approximately two thirds of learners are male.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. During 2009/10 success rates on AS- and A-level theatre studies were very high and are consistently very high on the national diploma interactive media. Success rates on the national diploma performing arts have declined over the last two years to just below average.
- The number of learners leaving their courses before completion is high on the national diploma performing arts and the intermediate level media production courses. Retention rates overall have improved in 2010/11, but remain below average. For learners who complete their courses, pass rates are high, with a high proportion achieving high grades.
- Learners that are retained make good progress in relation to their starting points, particularly those on performing arts courses. On A-level theatre studies and AS film studies learners do not always make as much progress as expected. For the majority of learners, progress in lessons, as confirmed by inspectors' observations, is good.
- Learners develop their specialist skills well. In a performing arts lesson learners work confidently exploring contemporary "live art" practice. Theatre studies learners produced very good improvised work in a learner-led workshop. Interactive media learners are able to manipulate software packages effectively to produce some high quality and well-researched work.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners contribute enthusiastically in lessons. In the best lessons teachers' planning is very detailed, with clear learning objectives that are designed to stretch learners of all abilities. Learners take responsibility for their own development and work well independently, having a mature and confident approach.
- Learning is less effective in a minority of lessons. These lessons are characterised by poor planning and little attention to meeting the different needs of learners. Teachers do not use questioning effectively to improve learners' understanding, develop higher order skills or foster self reliance. Lessons are often too teacher led, giving learners less opportunity to make progress.
- The curriculum meets the needs of learners well with good progression routes in a range of arts specialisms. The merging of classes of low recruiting courses has contributed to low retention rates. Teachers provide a good range of

enrichment activities for most learners. For some, particularly at intermediate level, opportunities for extracurricular activities are very limited.

- Support for learners is good. Learners value the support they receive from their teachers and tutors. Performing arts learners particularly appreciate the department's performance mentor who has made such a positive impact on their college experience. A minority of learners find the content and delivery of group tutorials uninteresting.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed manager has made an excellent start in providing a clear vision and strategy for improvement. The enthusiastic and well-motivated team are supported well by their managers. The appraisal process is not sufficiently robust.
- The self-assessment process is inclusive and thorough. The self-assessment report identifies accurately strengths and areas for improvement. Communication at all levels is good although a few staff do not fully understand the target-setting process.
- Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. However, in the music and media areas particularly, learners' opportunities are limited by some out-of-date and unreliable computer equipment and software. Learners highlight this as an area of concern. In a media lesson learners were unable to mount their work using professional techniques owing to a lack of basic equipment.

#### **What does New College Stamford need to do to improve further?**

- Improve success rates by raising retention through a more robust recruitment process and a more integrated, flexible and cohesive approach to unit delivery on vocational programmes.
- Improve accommodation and resources by considering all the viable options to improve learners' experience within budgetary constraints and implement the most suitable option in consultation with staff and learners.
- Continue to improve teaching and learning through the sharing of good practice and a robust approach to appraisal and staff development to ensure that all learners' needs are met effectively.

## Skills for work and life

## Grade 1

### Context

34. Currently 79 learners are following courses at entry level in skills for work and life of which 33 are aged 16 to 18. The vast majority are full-time. The split between male and female enrolments is fairly even. Learning takes place at the main college campus or in two nearby specially adapted houses. All learners study literacy and numeracy either as a discrete course or integrated with other learning. All undertake work experience for at least one morning a week either within the college or externally.

### Key findings

- Outcomes are outstanding. Success rates remain consistently high and above national averages on virtually all courses although learner numbers have doubled over a three year period. Learners make very good gains in their literacy, numeracy, communication, personal, social and vocational skills. Learners' confidence and self-esteem improves greatly while on the programme. Employers and partners speak highly of the learners' skills and abilities.
- Learners make excellent progress. Learners at entry level 3 spend three hours a week in their chosen vocational area working alongside foundation level learners. This provides them with a realistic view of the course requirements and an opportunity to try out various vocational routes. Progression to positive outcomes is high for all learners and shows an upward trend.
- Learners improve their ability to socialise and work cooperatively with others well. Many learners become clearer about their long-term goals. Learners at lower levels of ability improve their independence and living skills very well through realistic and useful work in the college houses. For example, they prepare and cook lunches, grow their own vegetables and carry out a range of household tasks successfully.
- Learners feel extremely safe and know who to speak to should they have any concerns. The college ensures learners at lower levels of ability fully understand safe practices by offering additional sessions on safety to reinforce and consolidate understanding. The main college and the two college houses provide a safe and nurturing environment. Staff reinforce healthy working practices frequently.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the better sessions teachers inspire, motivate and challenge learners. All staff use praise well and manage behaviour very effectively. They expect and receive high standards from the learners and encourage them to work increasingly independently. Staff deal with the learners in a very respectful manner and they respond well to this. Assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and communication skills is thorough.
- Close team working ensures staff have a very good understanding of learners' needs and abilities. They share information on learners regularly and monitor

progress towards accredited outcomes well. However, the systematic development of the broad range of learners' skills is not planned, monitored and recorded sufficiently well within short-term targets in individual learning plans and in lesson plans.

- The provision meets the needs and interests of the learners extremely well. Higher ability learners benefit from external work placements suited to their aspirations and weekly tasters within vocational areas. Those of lower ability take part in a wide variety of activities to improve their independent living skills. Learners develop their social skills in new environments through a broad range of enrichment activities.
- The provider has very effective links with a wide range of feeder schools and good relationships with supportive employers for work placements. Learners take part successfully in many community activities; often improving the general public's understanding of their abilities through the useful contributions they make to these events. For example, they helped to decorate the displays for a large local flower festival.
- Support for learners is outstanding. Staff liaise very effectively with a wide range of external support agencies. They provide training to support learners to travel independently to college and to use public transport effectively in their free time. Very good support is in place for the large number of learners with autistic spectrum disorders and for learners on work placement.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The manager expects and receives high standards from her staff. A culture of continuous improvement and innovative planning strengthens the provision. The manager uses staff appraisal and continuing professional development well. The self-assessment process is inclusive and thorough, although some of the text is insufficiently evaluative.
- The provision promotes an extremely inclusive learning environment. The large number of activities that involve learners in the wider college and community ensure they integrate well. Learners have a good profile within the college through running the sweet shop, delivering and collecting post, running a weekly flower service and various fund-raising events. No significant differences in achievement exist between any groups of learners.
- The college houses provide a valuable resource for learners to carry out realistic independent living skills although a few rooms are crowded at times. The manager utilises her team of staff well. The college recognises that in a number of cases learning support assistants require more guidance when working with minimal or no supervision. Plans are in place to address this issue.

### **What does New College Stamford need to do to improve further?**

- Improve teaching and learning further by: ensuring specific short-term targets for individual skills development are in place and can be reviewed regularly; by ensuring these targets are integrated more effectively into lesson planning; and by ensuring learning support assistants receive more guidance when working with minimal supervision.

## Information about the inspection

35. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's deputy principal as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
36. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in a significant number of the subject areas the college offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**New College Stamford**

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>					
Full-time learners	2098	1	1831	266	0
Part-time learners	1882	309	17	522	1034
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2				
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	1				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1				
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1				
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>				
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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