

# League Football Education

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 52949

**Name of lead inspector:** Tim Gardner HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 20 April 2012

**Type of provider:** Adult and community learning  
League Football Education  
Edward VII Quay  
Navigation Way  
Preston  
PR2 2YF

**Address:**

**Telephone number:** 0870 458 9250

## Information about the provider

1. League Football Education (LFE) was formed in 2004 as a partnership between the Football League and Professional Footballers Association to deliver training to apprentices at football league clubs in England and Wales. For the last six years, it has delivered the advanced apprenticeship in sporting excellence (ASE). LFE engages with 81 football clubs in the Football League, Premier League or Conference League. Recruitment and selection of apprentices are the sole responsibility of the club and LFE plays no role in this process. LFE limits the number of funded learners for each club to 18 and these learners receive funding from the Skills Funding Agency. At the time of the inspection, 1,177 apprentices were on programme. This is the only business that LFE engages in.
2. LFE employs 24 full-time and one part-time staff; 12 of these work in regions with an allocated case load of clubs. The remainder work in head office. LFE works with an extensive number of subcontractors to deliver the technical certificate or theory units in the ASE programme.
3. The following organisations provide training on behalf of LFE:
  - Accrington & Rossendale College
  - Barking & Dagenham College
  - Barnet & Southgate College
  - Barnsley College
  - Birmingham Football Club
  - Blackpool Sixth Form College
  - Boston Spa School
  - Brockenhurst College
  - Bromley College
  - Burton & South Derbyshire College
  - Bury College
  - Catten College
  - Central Bedfordshire College
  - Central Sussex College
  - Central Training
  - Chesterfield College
  - City Academy Bristol
  - Darlington College
  - Dearne Valley College
  - Doncaster College (High Melton Site)

- Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College
- East Durham College
- Easton College
- Exeter College
- Farnborough College
- Grimsby Town Study Support Centre
- Harefield Academy
- Havering College
- Hereford Sixth Form College
- Immanuel College
- Ivybridge Community College
- John Leggott College
- LAW Training Ltd
- Loughborough College
- Milton Keynes College
- Moulton College
- New College Swindon
- North Hertfordshire College
- Otley College
- Paignton Community College
- Peterborough Regional College
- Preston College
- Reaseheath College
- Sheffield Wednesday
- South Essex College
- South Nottingham College
- South Thames College
- Stanmore College
- Stoke on Trent Sixth Form College
- Sussex Downs College
- The Professional Footballers Association
- Totton College
- Walford & North Shropshire College
- Yeovil College

■ York College

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11</b>
<b>Employer provision:</b> Apprenticeships	1,104 apprentices

## Summary report

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	1

<b>Subject Areas</b>	
Sport, leisure and recreation	1

## Overall effectiveness

- LFE delivers an excellent programme for young football players who aspire to become a professional footballer. The high level of partnership and cooperation between LFE and football club staff provide apprentices with both a well-rounded and technically-challenging experience that prepares them admirably for a career in professional football as well as an opportunity to progress to an alternative career. A significantly high proportion of the apprentices successfully complete all aspects of the training programme. They develop high-level football skills and many go on to play professional football. Of those who do not continue in a football career, nearly all progress to another positive destination.

5. Highly-qualified club coaches deliver excellent football training; a range of sport science and medical specialists supports them. The ASE programme structure focuses on developing the core technical, tactical, physical and mental aspects of playing football at a professional level extremely well and meets all the learners' needs. LFE's use of partnerships to support learners is also excellent. A wide range of partners supports learners in wide variety of ways in order to develop the whole person and not just a football player. All staff involved in the programme, both club and LFE, provide learners with extensive guidance and support.
6. The management of the programme ensures that the maximum number of apprentices succeed in either gaining a professional football contract or progress to another positive destination such as alternative employment, further or higher education or an overseas appointment or scholarship. The excellent quality assurance systems ensure that learners have as positive experience as possible.

## Main findings

- The success rates for learners on the ASE programme are outstanding. LFE has maintained high rates of both overall success and success within planned timescales for the last four years and in 2010/11 these were both 91%. Regional differences are small. LFE has been very effective in improving the performance of minority ethnic groups and now no discernible difference remains in performance between groups of learners.
- The ASE programme is excellent at developing and improving both individual and team football skills. Learners make outstanding progress during and after the programme. The process used to track and monitor leavers' progression after the programme is excellent and tracks the destinations for a vast majority for at least a year. Of the 90% tracked, 87% achieved a positive destination of employment, education or training.
- The impact of the ASE programme on learners' social and economic well-being is outstanding. The percentage of learners achieving a full professional contract is improving and last year was 44%. However, the overall positive destinations achieved by learners have a major impact on their economic well-being.
- All learners feel very safe. A wide range of staff support learners and ensure their ongoing safety during all aspects of the programme. Club coaching, welfare staff, and designated safeguarding officers ensure learners' safety whilst at the club. LFE regional officers support them very well. Systems to ensure safe accommodation for learners living away from home are excellent.
- The ASE programme is excellent at developing learners' understanding of issues that can affect their health and well-being. Units cover topics such as physical development, stress and anxiety extremely well. Enrichment seminars and presentations also deal with wider matters such as drugs, gambling, alcohol and driving. Club staff ensure they monitor diet, nutrition and hydration, especially during physical activity periods, and that learners get sufficient recovery time.

- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Excellent practical skills sessions are highly motivational, safe and very well planned. Coaches and tutors link the theory to practice well and make very good use of resources to support learning. However, some coaches lack an understanding of teaching strategies to maximise theory-based learning.
- The extent to which the training meets the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The LFE meets the needs of learners, parents and football clubs exceptionally well. Clubs gain potential professional footballers, apprentices successfully gain football skills, a qualification and a coaching award.
- Partnerships are an outstanding strength of the provision with over 20 partners contributing to improving the experience and developing additional skills for apprentices. LFE manages these diverse partners extremely well so they can provide support including welfare, counselling as well as finance and career development advice.
- Care, guidance and support are outstanding. LFE works exceptionally well with club staff to ensure that apprentices benefit from the wide range of support. Regional officers work with potential apprentices and their parents before and during the apprenticeship and ensure they provide welfare and support to all apprentices. Learning support invigorates learning for the less able and extends learning for the more capable.
- LFE leaders and managers have very high expectations for learners' academic and practical performance. They set high standards and show outstanding capacity to improve the provision. The board provides highly-effective leadership, challenge and direction for LFE's work. LFE monitors closely the performance of learners, clubs, subcontractors and staff through highly-effective data reports and frequent communications.
- The promotion of safeguarding and equality and diversity to clubs and learners is outstanding. Learners and staff have a very good understanding of how these issues impact on learners. Highly-effective partnership working with a range of agencies has produced a good range of resources and training that has very effectively raised learners' and clubs' awareness of issues including bullying and homophobia.
- LFE's detailed and thorough quality systems, including self-assessment and use of feedback, are excellent and have driven continuous improvements to learning. Weaknesses identified by the last inspection are now key strengths. Observations of regional officers' work are very thorough, focus on the learner, and result in clear, closely-monitored action plans. However, observations of coaching and teaching do not always result in clear actions for improvement.
- LFE provides outstanding value for money as demonstrated by the learners' very high success rates and the quality of provision. Financial management is prudent and LFE uses financial surpluses to benefit the learners. Since the last inspection, LFE has managed development-funding assistance to clubs, helping them to improve their resources and equipment.

## **What does League Football Education need to do to improve further?**

- Improve coaches' classroom and teaching skills to increase their knowledge of the full range of delivery strategies so that coaches can enhance learning in their theory and tactical sessions.
- Ensure observations of teaching, learning and assessment focus on learning and result in clear and closely-monitored actions for improvement.

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

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

- getting a qualification whilst still playing football
- the great coaches and teachers
- the advice and guidance about what to do after the apprenticeship
- the help and support from all the staff involved
- being around the senior players, seeing what it is like to be a professional player
- how everybody at LFE and the club makes them feel welcome
- being able to play football every day
- the helpful way the clubs transfer recordings of games so learners can watch themselves, and others, on DVD
- the good quality virtual learning environment that they can access from home as well at training and how this supports them in their individual learning
- the way individual learning is managed
- living the dream.

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

- more choice of courses.

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

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

- how LFE staff support and encourage them in what they do with the apprentices
- the excellent links between LFE, employers and the education providers
- the very good communications with LFE
- how effectively the regional officers assist them in their roles
- the way that the LFE monitors both the club and the learner to ensure they receive the care needed to help them prepare for their future.

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

- nothing reported.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 1**

7. LFE's capacity to improve its provision is outstanding. Since the last inspection, in 2006, success rates have risen and have been maintained at a high rate. Data are used highly effectively to monitor and improve the performance of learners, clubs, LFE staff and education providers. Success rates, exit strategies and the use of management information, which were weaknesses at the last inspection, are now key strengths. Many other improvements have been made since the last inspection to benefit learners including the development of an excellent enrichment programme.
8. Quality improvement systems are excellent. They are detailed, thorough and comprehensive through all stages of the learners' journeys. Systems to use feedback from learners, staff, clubs and subcontractors to drive improvements in learning are excellent. The self-assessment process is very thorough and effective and uses a wide range of evidence and views to reach and substantiate judgements. The self-assessment report is very detailed and comprehensively answers all the evaluation statements in the Common Inspection Framework, making accurate judgements supported by a robust and wide range of evidence. The resulting quality improvement plan is used well to drive improvements and is monitored carefully. Many areas for improvement identified by the self-assessment have already been rectified.
9. Inspectors had a high degree of confidence in the self-assessment report and inspection confirmed the report's findings. The grades awarded by this inspection were all higher than at the last inspection.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 1**

10. Success rates for learners have been consistently high over the last four years and have been over 90% for the last two years. All learners who succeed do so within their planned time. Regional differences are small. Yorkshire and Humberside, however, has achieved 100% success rates for the last two years. LFE has reduced gaps in performance by groups of learners; the small numbers of Asian learners all succeed. The success rates for Black British learners have improved significantly from 50% to 100% last year. Many learners produce very good standards of work in their academic and theoretical units. A large proportion of learners complete the extended diploma and many of these are achieving a distinction grade profile.
11. All learners develop excellent football skills both individually and in team play. These include ball control, passing and dribbling, shooting, heading and goal keeping. They also develop advanced skills such as shielding the ball from defenders, passing through the channels to players making runs and deceiving the opposition into making wrong decisions. Individual learners get excellent



support from the coaches and this develops confidence and instils a mature approach to their overall training.

12. Learners enjoy the ASE framework and can readily identify how relevant it is to their intended career as a professional footballer. LFE has developed an excellent virtual learning environment to support staff and learners in achieving the component parts of the qualification. In particular, it is highly effective in monitoring and tracking learners' progress through each stage of the programme.
13. The improvement in learners' economic and social well-being is excellent. Each year increasing numbers of apprentices achieve a full professional football contract. LFE has also developed an outstanding system to monitor and track the progression for all leavers for at least a year after completing the programme. In the year 2010/11, it successfully tracked 90% of all leavers and 87% of these all achieved an alternative positive destination of either employment, further or higher education or other training.
14. The ASE programme is excellent at developing learners' understanding of issues that can impact on their health and well-being. Topics such as physical development and psychological factors such as stress and anxiety are all covered extremely well. Enrichment activities and additional seminars and presentations also address wider issues such as drugs, alcohol, gambling and driving.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 1**

15. Highly-qualified coaches deliver excellent coaching sessions, developing a wide range of exemplary skills in ball control, moving and passing, attacking and defending as well as scoring and goalkeeping. Coaches are also very adept at developing learners' coaching and performance analysis skills. Sessions are dynamic, exciting, safe and well managed with sufficient demand to challenge all learners. Classroom sessions are well planned, challenge learners and develop their understanding of the theoretical aspects of coaching and football. However, coaches demonstrate a limited knowledge of teaching strategies in their classroom work.
16. Tutors make very good use of initial assessments and inductions. They use academic records from schools and previous coaching reports very effectively to develop individual profiles and to help plan learning. LFE plans programmes to enable learners at all levels to achieve to the best of their ability, with higher achievers completing all 18 units of the extended theory unit, whilst others complete 7 or 12 units. Tutors use results from initial assessment well to plan for individual needs in lessons. LFE organises extremely effective additional support for learners with lower entry qualifications. Tracking of progress electronically is excellent, especially for those using the electronic portfolio.

17. The programme is excellent at meeting the needs of aspiring professional footballers. Apprentices enhance their football skills with over 40% gaining professional football contracts. Apprentices gain additional skills that can support them into employment if they do not gain a professional contract.
18. LFE works extensively with a wide range of partners to provide learners with a good range of additional support and help. LFE works with over 20 partners to provide additional elements to the apprenticeship programme. Partnerships with several universities support additional qualifications in using a video analysis programme, and safeguarding children. Strong partnerships with universities in Europe and the United States of America support apprentices to continue their football in Europe and the USA.
19. Support arrangements, particularly in the provision of information, advice and guidance, are outstanding. LFE staff work with potential apprentices and their parents prior to starting the apprenticeship to ensure they are appropriately prepared and understand what is expected of them. Highly-experienced LFE regional officers provide group and individual careers advice and guidance. Support for those leaving the programme is excellent with help in gaining access to trial matches for a wide range of league and non-league clubs, or even in Europe and the USA.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 1**

20. Leaders and managers have extremely high expectations for learners both academically and practically. They have driven continuous improvement in success rates and the quality of learning since the last inspection. LFE sets high standards and expectations for learners, clubs, regional officers and subcontractors. Excellent use is made of the virtual learning environment to monitor and share information about learners' progress. Communications between regional officers, clubs and subcontractors are highly effective and used to share good practice and monitor performance. The chief executive very actively promotes the work of LFE and apprentices' rights through national strategic groups. Partner organisations use LFE's work to show good practice in the industry, for example showing ministers how football is tackling racism.
21. The board provides highly-effective leadership, challenge and direction for LFE's work. Membership of the board is highly appropriate and consists of strategic leaders in the football industry. Board members receive all the information they need to challenge and understand the provision and can explain clearly key aspects of performance and LFE's challenges.
22. LFE's promotion of safeguarding to clubs and learners is outstanding. Very good work with the Football League has developed a valuable range of policies, procedures, guidance and risk assessments for clubs and learners. LFE carries out very thorough checks on safeguarding in clubs which result in action plans which are closely monitored. LFE and club staff are well qualified in

safeguarding; all regional officers have a level 2 safeguarding qualification. All relevant staff and landlords have Criminal Records Bureau checks.

23. LFE's promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. The culture of respect within clubs is now very good and has improved, as has the clubs' commitment to education as a result of LFE's awareness raising. Regional officers play a strong role in promoting equality and diversity and reinforcing positive behaviour. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is very good. It is enhanced through a wide range of activities including induction and equality training, including Kick it Out which focuses on racism and homophobia. Learners are clear about how to recognise and deal with bullying and inappropriate behaviour.
24. Quality improvement systems are excellent. They are detailed, thorough and comprehensive through all stages of the learners' programme. Systems to use feedback from learners, staff, clubs and subcontractors to drive improvements in learning are outstanding. Observations of reviews, induction and initial assessment are very thorough, focus on the learner, and result in clear action plans which are closely monitored. Observations to enhance club coaches' teaching and learning strategies are very well received. However, some observations of coaching and education do not lead to clear actions for improvement.
25. The self-assessment process is very thorough and effective and uses a wide range of evidence and views to reach and substantiate judgements. The self-assessment report is very detailed and comprehensively answers all the Common Inspection Framework evaluation statements, making accurate judgements supported by a robust and wide range of evidence. The resulting quality improvement plan is used well to drive improvements and is monitored carefully. Many areas for improvement identified by the self-assessment have already been dealt with.
26. LFE uses its resources very efficiently and effectively to secure outstanding value for money. Financial management is prudent. LFE has a large financial resource, part of which it is using to fund learners' coaching qualifications. The use of the development fund to benefit learners is highly effective and has resulted in clubs investing in a wide range of equipment including laptops and heart rate monitors.

## Information about the inspection

27. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's chief education officer, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
28. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls 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 each of the subject areas the provider offers.

<p><b>Record of Main Findings (RMF)</b></p> <p><b>League Football Education</b></p> <p><b>Learning types: 14 – 16:</b> Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; <b>16-18 Leamer responsive:</b> FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; <b>19+ responsive:</b> FE full- and part-time courses; <b>Employer responsive:</b> Train to Gain, apprenticeships</p>
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Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>		
Full-time learners	1,177	1,177
Part-time learners	0	0
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	1	
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1	
How well do learners progress?	1	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	1	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1	
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1	
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	1	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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