

First College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51841

Name of lead inspector: Derrick Spragg HMI

Last day of inspection: 19 March 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the college

1. First College is a registered charity and a 'not for profit' company limited by guarantee. Trustees are unpaid volunteers. First College, as an independent work based learning provider operates from centres in Louth and Skegness with contracts with Lincolnshire and Rutland LSC for work-based learning. First College works with schools 14 to 19 Diploma programmes and from September 2009 it has provided the Hospitality Diploma and Young Apprenticeships. Almost all First College's funding is from government.
2. Trustees are senior personnel from local authorities and commercial organisations. The business development manager has developmental and financial control of the college whilst the learning contracts manager has operational and quality control; both are accountable to the board of trustees. First College employs 43 staff, 22 full-time and 21 part-time. The company has achieved the Matrix award and Investors in People.
3. First College provides work-based learning for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships and adult learners on Train to Gain in three areas; health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise and business administration and law. The Flexible New Deal preparation for work programme contracted through A4E and the provision for learners aged 14 to 16 that has commenced recently was not inspected.
4. East Lindsey is a rural and coastal district of Lincolnshire. The proportion of people from ethnic minority groups is below the regional and national figure. Although the Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate is only slightly higher than the East Midlands region and Great Britain, the claimant per vacancy rate is nearly three times that of the East Midlands region and with much higher numbers of people on income-related benefits. Unemployment rates increase out of the holiday season in the coastal areas.
5. First College provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - A4E for Flexible New Deal foundation programmes
 - Lincoln College of Further Education for Train to Gain
 - Boston College of Further Education for Train to Gain

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14-16	18 part-time learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	108 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	
Hospitality	2
Business administration and law	1

Overall effectiveness

7. First College provides very good training for young people and adults. Outcomes for apprentices are good. Learners make good progress; overall rates of success are high and outstanding in administration. Learners attain good standards and apply skills effectively at work. Learners say they feel safe. Learners enjoy their learning and attend well.
8. Training, mainly in the workplace is very flexible and particularly well organised by First College to meet individual needs and those of employers. Careful planning of training takes place with mostly high quality individual learning sessions. Staff visit learners frequently and regularly to plan, train and review with them and their work supervisors. Good support is valued by learners and additional learning support provided by specialist staff if required.
9. Managers promote high standards and together with motivated and experienced staff are keen to continue to improve the training provision. Trustees carry out their duties effectively and give clear direction. First College safeguards young people and vulnerable adults effectively. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory and learners understand what it means to

them. First College takes learners' views seriously and acts on them. A very high number of learners and employers sent in very positive feedback to inspectors prior to the inspection. First College provides outstanding value for money.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates in administration are very high and in hospitality high. The overall success rate for all apprentices in 2008/09 was high at 78%. The success rate in the child development and well being programme is at a satisfactory level.
- Learners develop good skills and apply them very effectively at work. Learners say they feel safe and adopt good safe working practices. Learners are well motivated and enjoy their learning.
- Learners benefit from very good individual on-the-job training and well- planned assessment. Off-the-job training is good in accounting. The recording of a minority of short -term learning objectives are not sufficiently clear.
- First College offers an exceptionally good range of programmes for its size. Programmes are very flexible and respond particularly effectively to employers and individual learners' needs.
- The partnership working by First College is outstanding and enables the provision to develop very effectively to meet learners' needs. Partnerships are particularly responsive to local needs. The provider has a good record for contributing to highly relevant local and national initiatives along with other partners such as the lead role it plays in the Hospitality Diploma.
- Personal support from staff for learners is good. Learners receive good advice and guidance to further career progression. Employers are supportive.
- Leaders and managers promote high standards and improve performance to the benefit of learners. Staff are experienced and most are working towards higher-level qualifications in line with government requirements Trustees provide appropriate expertise and strategic direction. They review and evaluate overall performance effectively.
- The safeguarding arrangements for young people and vulnerable adults are strong. The management of health and safety is good.
- First College satisfactorily promotes equality and diversity. Most learners have a good awareness of what it means to them. Strategic planning for the promotion of equality and diversity is underdeveloped.
- The engagement of users to support and promote improvement is particularly effective and comprehensive.
- Self-assessment is thorough and robust. Managers and staff use it effectively to identify areas for improvement. The current process for observation of teaching and training does not focus sufficiently on learning and the learners' experience.

- First College provides outstanding value for money. The quality of provision is outstanding. First College provides good quality accommodation, learning resources and staff. First College, as a not for profit organisation, maximises investment in resources to benefit learners.

What does First College need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates further by continuing to provide good quality training and learning experiences that meet the individual's needs.
- Implement a more focussed evaluation process for teaching, training and learning by including more emphasis on learning and identifying where and when key training and learning activities take place.
- Improve the strategic approach to the promotion of equality and diversity by developing a plan for this area with measurable objectives which has regular reviews from managers and trustees.
- Continue with the good staff development by ensuring all training staff are working towards level 4 and 5 qualifications.
- Improve the use of objectives when planning learning tasks by ensuring staff record them for learners.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- superb quality of the training
- very well managed assessment
- the way courses help progress at work
- excellent work books
- being well prepared for the next step in education
- gaining confidence
- friendly, polite and very helpful staff
- developing communication skills
- individual support for basic skills.

What learners would like to see improved:

- parking around First College's premises
- explaining of NVQ at the start
- maintaining good pace throughout the course.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- First College meeting our needs very well
- swift response to any questions
- having the opportunity to develop the skills of young people in the area
- having regular communication with First College
- good standard of work achieved by learners
- dedicated professional group of staff
- excellent partnership working
- receiving feedback from staff on learners' progress
- being very involved in assessing learners' progress.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no comments.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. First College's capacity to improve is good. Learners achieve good outcomes. Overall and timely success rates are high, above national averages and with a strong upward trend since the last inspection in 2006. Leaders, managers and directors challenge effectively and set high standards. Well-managed quality improvement is responsive to users' views. The organisation and management of provision are appropriate to carry through plans for improvement.
11. The self-assessment and development plan contributes to raising standards. The development plan identifies clearly actions to improve provision and effectively monitors progress. The current self-assessment is self critical, uses data well to support judgements and is broadly accurate.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Overall outcomes for apprentices and adult learners are good. The overall and timely success rates for all apprentices in 2008/09 were high. The success rate in administration was particularly high and in hospitality high. Achievement by learners aged 16 to 18 is particularly good. The success rate in the child development and well being programme is at a satisfactory level. Learners make good progress.
13. Learners develop good skills and apply them effectively at work. Most learners achieve additional qualifications that enhance their economic well being and employability. Learners say they feel safe adopt good safe working practices. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities at work. Learners are well motivated, enjoy their learning and attend well.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

14. On-the-job training is particularly good. Learners benefit from well-planned and structured individual on-the-job training and assessment, using a wide range of methods and good resources that promote progress and develop confidence. Assessors use their experience and skills very well to develop learners' skills and understanding. The programme is particularly good at providing learners, often straight from school with a clear understanding of what employers expect of them at work and how they should conduct themselves.
15. Coordination of learning in the workplace and the provision of learning for individuals are very good. Very effective planning and reviewing with supervisors and learners ensures the best use of learning opportunities. In the other areas, employers provide additional training for learners with their own programmes. Off-the-job training is good in accounting and in learning support sessions.

16. Support for learners with any additional literacy and numeracy support requirements is good. Learners are able to attend either formal training sessions at the college or benefit from individual tuition in the workplace. Staff are qualified to an appropriate level. Specification of overall learning objectives is good. The recording of some short-term objectives lack sufficient detail and clarity.
17. First College offers a very good range of programmes that are flexible and meet the needs of employers and individual learners exceptionally well. Most learners benefit from additional training leading to qualifications in information technology, management, healthy foods and special diets certification. First College offers clear progression routes for all hospitality functions and a broad range of business programmes. A very flexible accounting programme meets the needs of users and includes options for group or individual coaching in the workplace. The provider works very effectively with major employers in designing tailored apprenticeship programmes that enable learners to progress at an increased pace to meet seasonal work requirements.
18. The partnership working by First College is outstanding and enables the provision to develop very effectively to meet learners' needs. Work with employers, schools, local authorities and other partners supports programme development and widens participation. First College works with other providers and local agencies to share resources and good practice. The provision is particularly responsive to local needs and the provider is good record at contributing to highly relevant local and national initiatives along with other partners such as the lead role it plays in the Hospitality Diploma, its involvement with schools in the development of other Diplomas and the development of Young Apprenticeships.
19. Experienced and qualified staff provide good care, guidance and support. The planning of initial advice and guidance is good. The use of analysis of learners' prior levels of skills and identification of additional learning needs are highly effective. First College staff work hard to establish high levels of trust with learners. Staff work well with learners to overcome personal problems. First College staff use their excellent employer relationships and good links with a wide range of specialist agencies to support learners. Former successful learners at level four are encouraged to come in to support existing learners with project work. Learners receive good advice and guidance during their programmes to further career progression. Employers are supportive and learners benefit from coaching at work from experienced practitioners.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

20. Leaders and managers promote high standards and improve performance to the benefit of learners. Managers promote good teamwork. Staff benefit from well managed staff development and they contribute effectively to improving provision. Trustees provide appropriate expertise and strategic direction. They review and evaluate overall performance effectively.

21. The safeguarding arrangements for young people and vulnerable adults are strong. Staff understand their responsibilities very well and prioritise safeguarding in the course of their work with learners and employers. Discussions with employers on commencement of training and throughout, place a high emphasis on understanding their part in the requirements to safeguard learners at work. Managers and trustees ensure the effective implementation of the safeguarding arrangements. The management of health and safety is good.
22. First College promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. Participation by minority ethnic groups is in line with the local population. The provider monitors employers' arrangements carefully. Most learners have a good awareness of what equality and diversity means to them in their work. Appropriate data monitoring systems are in place and there are no significant gaps in performance by different groups of learners in the same programme. Policies and procedures to support effective promotion are appropriate. The equality and diversity working group involves staff and learners. Leaders, managers and trustees review most aspects of First College's strategy and operations very well but the position of a strategy for equality and diversity is not clear. Strategic planning for the promotion of equality and diversity is underdeveloped.
23. The engagement of users to support and promote improvement is particularly effective and comprehensive. Managers and staff encourage learners to contribute to group sessions to discuss their views. Most learners attend. A wide range of methods generates learners and employers' views. Managers and staff take particularly effective action to improve the provision in response to these views.
24. Self-assessment is thorough. The use of robust management review, internal verification and evaluation processes effectively to identifies areas for improvement. The current process for observation of teaching and training does not focus sufficiently on learning and the learners' experience.
25. First College provides outstanding value for money. The range and responsiveness of the provision for users is outstanding. Partnerships work is outstanding and adds value to the provision and the local area. The provider manages good quality accommodation, learning resources and staff very well and achieves high success rates for learners, most of whom achieve additional qualifications. First College, as a not for profit organisation, maximises investment in resources to benefit learners.

Subject areas

Hospitality

Grade 2

Context

26. First College has 33 hospitality apprentices. Twenty are male, 12 have additional learning needs and none declares disability. The provider offers NVQ programmes at level 2 and 3 in professional cookery and food and drink service, mainly in the workplace. Occasionally learners train at First College's catering facilities. The provider has three sites and the staff team consists of six assessors and a team leader.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Overall and timely success rates are well above the national average. In 2008/09, 81% of apprentices aged 16 to 18 achieved a full framework.
- Most learners are making very good progress towards achieving the goals in their individual learning plan.
- Learners develop excellent vocational, personal and social skills. They have a sound awareness of healthy eating and well-being. Learners achieve high standards of work and good all round hospitality expertise that enables them to work confidently in a variety of work roles. Learners demonstrate good skills in providing a range of food and drink services.
- Learners benefit from good well-structured on-the-job training and well planned assessment that helps builds their confidence. The good use of learning resources supports learning at work. Learners develop good understanding of the priority for safe working and put this into practice very well. Recording and specifying short-term learning objectives are not always sufficiently effective in clarifying timescales for completion of tasks.
- The range of provision meets the needs and interests of users particularly well with clear progression routes covering all main hospitality functions and levels. Learners achieve additional qualifications for the licensed trade, healthy foods and special diets. First College works very effectively with employers designing programmes that meet seasonal requirements in the local tourist industry.
- The provider has developed outstanding partnerships. First College leads the schools Hospitality Diploma cluster and provides Young Apprenticeships with local partnership groups. The provider actively promotes hospitality as a career working closely with a range of local partner schools and companies. First College provides a particularly useful Saturday cookery club for young people still at school to get to know and experience hospitality training and explore career opportunities.
- The quality of individual care, guidance and support is good. Learners value the high levels of support including good coaching from First College staff and

employers in the workplace. Experienced staff provide skilful additional learning support and enable learners to achieve literacy and numeracy skills.

- Leadership and management are good. Managers and leaders have taken effective action to achieve success rates above the national average. The quality improvement system including internal verification successfully raises the quality of training. Leaders promote high standards in a supportive culture appreciated by staff and learners.
- Learners have the benefit of developing their understanding of the need for equality and diversity in the workplace by the frequent discussion they have about these matters with staff when they visit them at work. Whilst this is helpful, some of the topics are not sufficiently relevant

What does First College need to do to improve further?

- Continue to increase the number of apprentices who gain the full framework by providing high quality individual training.
- Improve the recording of short-term learning objectives by including planned completion dates and then recording completion
- Develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity further by identifying and discussing job-related topics during reviews and other learning sessions.

Business, administration and law

Grade 1

Context

27. First College has 75 learners on business administration and law programmes, two thirds of whom are training in administration, 17 are male, four have additional learning needs and none declares a disability. First College offers NVQ at levels 1, 2 and 3 in administration and customer service and level 4 in accounting and level 4 and 5 in management. All training and assessment takes place at work except for the majority of accounting learners.

Key findings

- The overall success rate in administration in 2008/09 was very high at 90% as was the timely success rate at 86%. The overall and timely success rate for the whole of the business administration and law programme was very high at 86% and 84% respectively.
- Learners' work is of a very high standard and they have a strong ownership and pride in their work. Learners greatly enjoy their work and develop excellent increased levels of confidence. Their teamwork and communications are highly effectively. Learners have a very good understanding of key skills, which they apply very well at work and in other spheres of their life.
- Learners develop excellent job skills within the workplace, which in most cases has led to either promotion or increased levels of responsibility. Most learners progress from level two to level three and in accounts to level four. Other learners progress to a different business programme.
- Assessors use their experience and skills very well to develop learners' skills and understanding. The planning and provision of learning at work for individuals is very good. The programme is particularly good in providing learners, often straight from school with a clear understanding of what employers expect of them at work and how to conduct themselves.
- Coordination of learning is very good. Very effective planning and reviewing with supervisors and learners in the workplace ensures the maximising of learning opportunities. Teaching is good in the formal accounting and learning support sessions. In the other areas, employers provide additional training for learners with their own programmes.
- Support for learners with any additional literacy and numeracy support requirements is good. Staff are qualified to an appropriate level. Specification of overall learning objectives is good. The recording of some short-term objectives lack sufficient detail and clarity.
- Learners benefit from an excellent range of programmes planned carefully around their individual needs, their work context and employers' requirements. First College staff and employers encourage learners to study for higher professional qualifications, which most achieve.

- A high proportion of learners achieve additional qualifications in health and safety, first aid, information technology and management. First College together with employers provides learners with a faster programme of learning to meet the needs of those in seasonal work.
- Partnership working with employers is excellent. Staff have a very good understanding of employers' needs and work closely with them to develop individual programmes with learners. Staff are contactable and communicate very well with employers. Employers are highly involved and participative in all aspects of learners' programmes.
- Partnerships with awarding bodies, schools, local authorities, training companies and colleges are excellent. First College is heavily involved in the local Business Diploma consortia. It is also working in partnerships to provide staff development, development of functional skills, and with an awarding body piloting accounting training in India.
- Initial advice and guidance is good with particularly effective use of scans of learners' prior levels of skills and identification of additional learning needs. Staff are very supportive. Staff arrange additional or out of hours visits to help with personal difficulties. Links with a wide range of specialist support agencies are good.
- Operational management is good. Staff all share, participate in the aspirations of the company, and are highly motivated. Company premises are well resourced and staff have workable caseloads. Internal verification is thorough. The staff development programme is good.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Staff are able to include learning about equality of opportunity in reviews. Employers effectively promote equality and diversity. Learners feel safe from bullying and harassment, fully able to recognise the problem and they know how to complain.

What does First College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the recording of a minority of the short-term learning objectives by making them more specific, showing achievement and what is left to do.
- Further develop the planning and monitoring of on-the-job tuition by linking it to employers' training and incorporating it into learning plans.

Information about the inspection

28. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality assurance manager, 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 local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
29. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

First College

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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	99	0	99
Part-time learners	16	16	0
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
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?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	N/A		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	N/A		
Quality of provision	1	1	1
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?	2		
Leadership and management	2	2	2
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?	3		
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?	1		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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