

Lincoln College

General further education college

Inspection dates	17–20 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Managers are unable to monitor key aspects of programmes because they lack access to well-developed management information.
- Managers do not make sufficiently effective use of lesson observations to improve rapidly the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Learners in 16 to 19 study programmes and apprentices do not make sufficient progress in developing their English and mathematics skills.
- Too many managers and teachers lack sufficient expertise to challenge learners to reach their full potential and too many learners and apprentices do not develop their knowledge as rapidly or extensively as they ought.
- Learners' attendance at lessons is not high enough, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Too few 16- to 19-year-old learners participate in high-quality external work experience or progress to higher-level study or apprenticeships.

The provider has the following strengths

- Managers have a clear vision for the college that all staff understand.
- Adult learners benefit from good lessons that help them progress into further learning and work.
- Through strong partnership work, managers have developed a curriculum that meets the needs of employers well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and recent industrial experience that they use well to link learning with the workplace; learners and apprentices develop good practical skills that prepare them well for employment.
- Students benefit from an extensive enrichment programme that helps them develop their personal and social skills.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Lincoln College is a large general further education college with campuses in Lincoln, Newark and Gainsborough. The college provides a wide range of courses, including apprenticeships, study programmes and adult learning programmes. Apprentices attending programmes with subcontractors come from all parts of the country. Around 18% of college learners are from minority ethnic groups and 29% of learners have a declared learning difficulty.
- The proportion of young people leaving schools in Lincolnshire with at least five GCSEs grades A* to C including English and mathematics is similar to the national rate. Educational levels of the population as a whole are slightly lower than average for England. Unemployment is higher than the national rate and fewer individuals are employed in managerial and technical roles than in other parts of the country.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Extend the range, quality and availability of management information so that managers at all levels of the organisation are able to successfully monitor and improve the quality of programmes.
- Improve the effectiveness of lesson observation processes so that all observers link their observations to a good range of learner progress and performance data, and make evaluative judgements that managers use effectively to improve the skills of individual teachers.
- Provide training and support to teachers of 16 to 19 study programmes so that they:
 - recognise the potential of each learner
 - set clear and demanding targets for each individual learner
 - provide teaching and learning that matches the needs of individual learners and helps them to achieve their full potential
 - support learners to progress to higher-level programmes including apprenticeships and university courses.
- Provide training and support for teachers of apprenticeships and 16 to 19 study programmes so that they are able to:
 - incorporate English and mathematics topics successfully within their lessons
 - help learners and apprentices to extend their skills and apply them in a vocational context
 - monitor closely the effectiveness of this work and intervene when it is not successful.
- Implement a clear approach to improving attendance at lessons, especially for English and mathematics, to help all learners make good progress.
- Ensure that all learners can further develop their work-related skills through participation in appropriately challenging work experience.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, governors, leaders and managers have been slow to respond to the demands of the 16 to 19 study programme, leading to a significant decline in 2014/15 in the proportion of younger learners who successfully completed their qualifications. During the same period, they also presided over a decline in apprenticeship success rates.
- Managers have been slow to implement an effective English and mathematics strategy that ensures that the majority of learners following 16 to 19 study programmes develop their skills sufficiently in these subjects. In the last year, managers have given a lot of attention to this area, but have not yet resolved the low attendance and slow progress of learners.
- The self-assessment report does not identify areas for improvement in enough detail and fails to give them sufficient weighting in its evaluation of the quality of provision; strengths are often no more than norms.
- Managers do not receive sufficient appropriate and timely management information. This limits the extent to which they can intervene to make necessary improvements. For instance, heads of school are unable to view reports on the progress that learners are making against their target grades or easily view the proportion of learners who are undertaking work experience. Senior leaders do not set challenging targets for these aspects of the study programme or monitor them carefully enough in monthly senior management meetings.
- Managers who observe teaching and learning are broadly accurate in their evaluations of lessons. However, a minority of observers write overly descriptive reports that do not identify areas for improvement in sufficient detail to support effective action planning that leads to improvements.
- Managers have improved the organisation of both college-led and subcontracted apprenticeships. They have frequent review meetings and carry out regular observations of teaching, learning and assessment to check the quality of provision at subcontractors. Managers have stopped contracting with a number of poorly performing partners but a number of apprentices who have yet to complete their programmes remain with these subcontractors.
- The chief executive officer (CEO), governors and senior managers provide strong strategic leadership and have a clear vision that focuses on meeting the needs of employers. Managers at every level of the organisation are clear about the direction of the college and support the vision. Since the appointment of the CEO, senior leaders have embarked on an ambitious process of creating a culture of continuous improvement but this is yet to have the necessary impact.
- Senior leaders and managers make good use of their strong partnerships with employers and stakeholders, including local enterprise partnerships, to develop provision that meets local and regional priorities well. Managers work effectively with three large national organisations to provide learners with improved routes to employment.
- Leaders have invested considerably in developing management and leadership capacity, with a strong focus on performance management, and they hold managers at every level of the organisation to greater account. A considerable number of staff receive support to improve their performance. Despite these changes, managers acknowledge that the impact on learners remains too variable across different curriculum areas.
- Leaders and managers promote equality and inclusiveness well across the organisation. They have developed good procedures that they use well to tackle bullying and harassment by staff or students. However, teachers and assessors do not promote diversity consistently well in learning sessions.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governors were slow to identify the likely impact of the introduction of the study programme that resulted in a significant drop in the college's overall performance in 2014/15. However, governors were instrumental in the recent change to the senior leadership team and played a significant role in shaping the current strategic direction of the college.
 - Governors now have access to better information that helps them to challenge senior managers and hold them to account. They have good links with curriculum teams and are able to speak insightfully about the challenges facing the college. They bring a good breadth of skills to the board.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Managers and staff have created an environment where learners are safe and feel safe. Managers use their extensive links with external agencies to safeguard learners.
 - They keep good records of incidents and deal with them effectively and swiftly when they arise. Learners know who to contact if they have any concerns.

- All staff and governors have received appropriate training in safeguarding and on how to identify and refer those at risk of radicalisation or engagement in extremist activities. However, despite the training, managers are aware of the need for teachers to integrate these themes more effectively in lessons to raise further learners' awareness and understanding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Many teachers of 16 to 19 study programmes and of learners with high needs fail to plan adequately for the different abilities of learners. Consequently, learners who find work more difficult often make slow progress, and most-able learners do not benefit from challenging activities.
- Too many teachers of 16- to 19-year-olds give insufficient consideration to assessment planning. As a result, many students have too much work to do at key points during the year, which prevents them completing work to the standard required to achieve high grades.
- Teachers promptly mark and return work but the majority of those who teach 16- to 19-year-olds do not provide feedback that is sufficiently useful to learners. Inspectors observed examples of feedback that used stock phrases that were cut-and-pasted into feedback documents or where the teacher's remarks included spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. A minority of teachers do not provide feedback in enough detail to help learners improve.
- A minority of teachers do not maintain accurate and up-to-date records of learner progress. They and their managers do not always have a good understanding of how well groups of learners are doing and are unable to intervene effectively when progress is slow.
- Learners with high needs require help from teachers to access the electronic systems used to record their progress and achievement. This makes it difficult for them to understand how well they are doing and, as a result, they are slow to develop confidence in their ability to achieve their goals independently.
- A minority of teachers and assessors do not use information about learners' and apprentices' existing abilities to set minimum and aspirational targets. In a few cases, learners set their own target grades without moderation from staff. Targets are often too challenging or not challenging enough, and learners fail to make the expected level of progress.
- Additional learning support staff have mixed success in assisting learners who need extra help to complete their studies. Some groups of learners do better than their peers, but others do less well. This is despite staff rapidly identifying the extra help learners need and focusing on developing their independence within a supportive learning community. Staff do not always identify apprentices' support needs early enough to help them complete their frameworks by their planned end date. However, staff manage support for learners with high needs well.
- The majority of on-the-job training is very effective in helping apprentices develop their skills, but this is not consistent. In a minority of subject areas within college-led provision and in a small amount of subcontracted provision, the quality of on-the-job training is not high enough or sufficiently well linked to other aspects of apprentices' programmes. A small minority of employers are insufficiently involved in planning training for their apprentices.
- Teachers and assessors are well qualified and have relevant vocational experience that they use well to motivate learners and link classroom activities with the workplace. Consequently, learners on classroom-based programmes develop good work-related skills that prepare them for employment, and apprentices gain technical knowledge and practical skills that they use to good effect in their jobs.
- Assessors collect a good range of assessment evidence through flexible and effective assessment processes and this is beginning to improve apprentices' progress. Assessment of adult learners is effective.
- Managers have introduced a new electronic portfolio system that enables managers and assessors to understand more clearly the progress of apprentices. The use of these systems is beginning to improve the rate of progress of current apprentices.
- Managers have given a high priority to the use of technology to support learning and this is beginning to improve the quality of learning both within and outside of lessons. However, developments are in their infancy and it is too early to judge the overall impact of this initiative.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

- Attendance is below the college's own target in most subject areas, and especially in English and mathematics. Low attendance and poor punctuality affects learners' progress in a minority of 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Managers, assessors and teachers of 16 to 19 study programmes have not yet ensured that all learners develop the good English and mathematical skills that they need for further study and employment. Too few learners pass their GCSE and functional skills examinations. Only a minority of teachers integrate and promote English and mathematics effectively in lessons.
- Not enough learners develop work-related skills through participation in external work experience. Care sector learners benefit from work placements but only a minority of others experience such external opportunities. However, learners do develop effective employability skills in lessons and through assignments.
- Learners help one another and listen to each other's points of view, but too few have opportunities in their lessons to discuss current matters that affect British society. In contrast, foundation learners in Newark discuss, recall and apply British values effectively.
- Too few learners progress to higher levels of study or employment despite the wide range of information, advice and guidance available to them from teachers and specialist college staff. Assessors give apprentices good informal careers advice. Staff keep parents and carers of learners with education, health and care plans well informed to help with transition into and out of college.
- Learners' behaviour is good. Learners are courteous and respectful to teachers and to each other, and they support each other well in classrooms and during other learning activities.
- Learners are proud of their achievements, the skills that they develop and the progress that they make. Many develop good practical and technical skills that enable them to create high-quality products and deliver good professional services. For example, a level 3 production arts learner recently organised an excellent 'Help for Heroes' afternoon tea event for ex-service personnel as part of a coursework unit and a construction apprentice manages a stock control system at work very efficiently. Learners' written work is not always as good as their practical work.
- The great majority of learners develop good personal and social skills and qualities, such as self-confidence, and presentation and team-working skills. Teachers create good opportunities in lessons that enable learners to develop these skills successfully. However, most entry-level learners with high needs do not improve their personal and social skills to the expected extent.
- Learners benefit from the college's extensive programme of additional activities in which many of them participate. For example, sports science learners run coaching sessions with local schools and business studies learners have engaged successfully in a joint marketing project with learners in Italy, The Netherlands and Germany.
- The college provides a pleasant environment in which learners feel safe. Learners understand most safeguarding matters and know who to approach if they have concerns. The college's learner support service ensures that learners receive good help and advice about staying safe through induction, counselling, tutorials and referral to external specialist support services. However, many learners are not clear enough about the dangers that extremism and radicalisation may pose to their own well-being and that of wider society.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- Learners following 16 to 19 study programmes make slightly less progress from their starting points than might be expected because teachers do not challenge them enough. Although the large majority of 16- to 19-year-old learners successfully gain their core academic or vocational qualifications, the grades they achieve are not high enough and this limits their progression opportunities. Adult learners, however, make the expected level of progress.
- Managers and staff have improved the pace at which apprentices complete their frameworks, but a minority of those on college-based programmes still do not complete within agreed timescales. Managers have taken appropriate steps to rationalise subcontracted provision, but there remains a legacy of apprentices who are significantly behind schedule.

- The proportion of 16 to 19 study programme learners who pass their English and mathematics qualifications is too low, particularly for those studying at level 2. Although current learners are making better progress than those in previous years, their development is not yet rapid enough. Teachers of programmes for adults focus more effectively on English and mathematics and, as a result, adults make progress at the expected rate.
- Current apprentices pass their functional skills qualifications, but they do not develop their English and mathematics skills sufficiently in the context of their work roles. One reason for this is that staff do not do enough to incorporate the teaching of these skills throughout apprentices' programmes.
- Severely disabled learners and those with complex needs make good progress in developing a range of skills, but in a minority of cases, their progress is not rapid enough. As a result, they are not able to move quickly towards independence and too few gain employment on leaving the programme.
- Most 16- to 18-year-old learners move on to further education or employment at the end of their courses. However, not enough learners progress to higher-level programmes, including university courses, or to apprenticeships. Most adults progress into suitable further learning or employment. Managers do not systematically collect information about what happens to apprentices at the end of their training, but for the minority that managers know about, almost all progress into positive employment outcomes.
- Learners with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers overall. However, managers have yet to address effectively the performance shortfall of a small number of specific groups, such as young people with multiple learning difficulties and adults with dyslexia.
- Learners and apprentices enjoy attending college and develop their practical and broader employability skills well. For classroom-based learners, these skills equip them effectively for future employment. Apprentices are able to apply their skills in the workplace and their employers value the contribution they make.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- The college has around 3,300 study programme learners on a wide range of vocational and academic courses on three campuses. The college offers study programmes from entry level to level 3, including specialist vocational qualifications and A levels. The large majority of learners remain on their programmes and achieve their core learning aims, but too few pass English and mathematics qualifications.
- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Most teachers focus on the activities learners will complete rather than what they will learn, which reduces the effectiveness of lessons.
- Teachers do not check learners' progress well enough. For example, when asked what they had learned, a learner in one class said 'Hinduism' and the teacher did not check the learner's knowledge of this extensive topic in more depth. Teachers of entry-level classes monitor learning effectively. However, managers have not ensured that they share this good practice with their colleagues.
- A minority of learners set their own targets for achievement with insufficient guidance from teachers. Teachers do not use target grades when planning lessons. Most learners do not achieve their aspirational target grades and many make slower than expected progress.
- Too many teachers do not plan assessment effectively. Teachers overburden learners at key points during the year and, although learners pass their core qualifications, the large workload often prevents them from completing enough work to achieve high grades.
- Teachers do not provide sufficiently useful feedback on marked work that would help learners to improve their performance. A small minority of teachers write comments that contain spelling errors.
- Attendance at English and mathematics lessons is low. Although attendance is higher for other subjects, it is not high enough. Punctuality is low in a minority of lessons. Teachers ensure that learners who are late for lessons catch up. However, teachers do not challenge these learners sufficiently to address their lateness and minimise disruption to learning.
- Teachers do not plan adequately to include English and mathematics within their lessons. The majority of students do not make the progress they should in improving these vital skills in a vocational context.
- Learners follow an extensive enrichment programme that prepares them for work experience and their next steps in education and employment.

Managers have increased the proportion of learners who participate in external work experience but acknowledge that they need to make further progress. Many learners have very positive experiences in work placements and a few go on to work either full- or part-time with the employer.

- Study programme learners receive suitable careers advice and teachers add to this with informal advice. However, too few learners make good use of this information to help them progress to higher-level studies or apprenticeships.
- Learners on craft courses including hairdressing, construction, engineering and cookery learn good practical skills. A few learners in these areas complete their vocational qualifications early and then develop skills appropriate to higher-level qualifications.

Adult learning programmes

are good

- Around 2,500 adults study at the college or on community sites on full- and part-time courses. Programmes for adults are available in most subject areas, including English (including for speakers of other languages), mathematics, information technology, and access to higher education.
- Leaders have a sound understanding of their local labour market and community needs. Managers work in close partnership with community groups, local authorities, employers and Jobcentre Plus to ensure that the majority of adult learners successfully gain relevant skills that improve their chances of securing employment, or enable them to be more effective in their existing job roles and personal lives. Many develop the skills they need to progress to higher education courses very effectively.
- Following a slight drop in outcomes for learners, the large majority now make at least expected progress towards achieving their qualifications because of improved teaching, learning and assessment and better management of those at risk of dropping out.
- Learners successfully develop key employability skills. They behave respectfully, work together well in teams and improve their independent learning skills. On access to higher education courses, learners receive highly effective individual coaching, take pride in working to high standards and acquire good research and study skills that prepare them thoroughly for university.
- Most vocational teachers help learners to develop their English and mathematics skills by integrating these subjects into their lessons. This enables learners to apply these skills successfully within a vocational context.
- The majority of teachers provide learners with detailed feedback on assignment work, which helps them to improve. Teachers routinely correct learners' grammatical and spelling errors and this improves their writing.
- Teachers support and care for learners well. They foster a positive learning environment that breaks down barriers to learning and helps learners to become more confident in their ability to learn.
- The vast majority of teachers successfully promote equality in lessons. They encourage learners from very diverse backgrounds to help each other in class and to work collaboratively on key activities, enabling all learners to participate in learning.
- On most non-accredited courses, targets are clear and successfully support learners' progress. However, on a small minority of courses, targets are not precise enough to help learners improve.
- Teachers do not make good use of the findings from assessments of learners' starting points to plan and deliver sessions that meet the needs of all learners. Too many learners undertake the same activities as others in their group, irrespective of their starting points. Teachers do not challenge most-able learners to reach their full potential.
- Attendance is low on adult courses and punctuality is poor on a small minority of courses. This prevents learners from making better than expected progress.
- All learners feel safe and are safe. However, learners do not develop a firm enough understanding in relation to the prevention of radicalisation and of British values.

Apprenticeships

require improvement

- The college provides a range of apprenticeships in health care, engineering, construction, information technology, retail, business administration and customer service. There are around 3,700 apprentices and about a third of these are on advanced level programmes. Subcontractors train two thirds of apprentices, mostly in the East Midlands.
- The proportion of apprentices who successfully completed their programme in 2014/15 was low and too few completed within the planned timescale.

- Following a management restructure, apprentices are now benefiting from better planning of the various components of the apprenticeship. However, managers recognise the need to do even more to ensure that apprentices make good progress.
- Apprentices do not develop their English and mathematics skills sufficiently because assessors do not promote these skills across all aspects of the apprenticeship. A few apprentices study English and mathematics at a higher level but most do not study beyond the minimum requirements of their framework.
- The majority of employers allocate sufficient time and contribute well to progress reviews, target setting and the planning of workplace learning. These employers make good links with college-based training activities. However, a minority of employers do not participate in apprentices' progress reviews and they have insufficient understanding of the apprenticeship programme. This impedes the progress of their apprentices.
- Most apprentices receive frequent visits in college and at work, but others do not benefit from the same level of support. The majority of reviews are comprehensive, but a minority are too brief, with insufficient in-depth discussion around diversity, safeguarding and the promotion of British values.
- Managers only know what becomes of a minority of apprentices once they complete their programme. However, of those whose destination managers know, the vast majority progress to higher-level apprenticeships, further training, sustained employment or to more responsible roles with their employer.
- Managers have strengthened support for subcontractors and integrated them into college processes well; this is contributing to quality improvements. However, managers have yet to set subcontractors sufficiently demanding targets for apprenticeship achievements.
- Most trainers and assessors have good occupational experience that they use well to provide flexible on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices complete practical work to a high standard. However, in a minority of cases, the link between off-the-job and workplace training is poorly coordinated, slowing the progress of apprentices.
- Apprentices develop strong work-related, personal and social skills. They make a positive contribution to their employers' businesses and employers value the apprentices they employ.
- Assessors make frequent workplace visits and use a broad range of assessment methods; this is helping apprentices to make better progress towards completing their work-based qualifications. Most assessors are beginning to make effective use of an online system for monitoring progress, setting targets and recording assessment evidence.

Provision for learners with high needs

requires improvement

- The college currently has 72 learners in receipt of high-needs funding from two local authorities. The majority of high-needs learners are on discrete entry-level programmes; others are studying levels 1 and 2 programmes in vocational areas.
- Too few entry-level learners benefit from individually tailored programmes. Units of qualifications taken do not always prepare learners for life after college. Few staff make good use of records for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited programmes. Managers are therefore unable to monitor the progress and achievements of learners.
- The majority of entry-level learners and their parents are unable to access electronic systems independently to monitor progress and achievement. As a result, learners do not take enough responsibility for their learning and progress is often slow.
- Entry-level learners receive too much support and this limits their opportunities to practise the skills needed for greater independence. Consequently, a few learners lack the ability to make important decisions for themselves and this makes them unprepared for adult life. However, the majority of staff make good use of visual cues, adapted resources and physical support to help learners.
- Too few entry-level learners progress into work. A small minority have gained paid employment this year through a supported internship programme provided by an external agency. Learners have the opportunity to experience work in a variety of simulated environments and internal placements but do not routinely access external work experience, despite expressing the ambition to do so.
- Learners benefit from impartial advice and guidance provided by college staff at transition points and on request. However, staff do not routinely offer independent advice and guidance at the annual review of learners' education, health and care plans. Staff ask learners whether they would like the input of their parents and carers at their annual review, but a parent forum is not yet set up to help manage changes to programmes or transition into or out of college.

- The most able learners who have an education, health and care plan benefit from individually tailored programmes. These learners achieve well and progress to higher levels of study.
- Staff are well qualified with a good level of training and experience that they use well to support learners. There is currently no requirement for any learner with high needs to access specialist therapies while at college.
- Staff manage very effectively the transition of learners into the college and the assessment of their learning and support needs. A range of link programmes helps learners to familiarise themselves with the environment and relationships with local schools are good.

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	15,922
Principal/CEO	Gary Headland
Website address	www.lincolncollege.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	368	1043	1122	855	1792	551	17	52
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	512	1655	220	1055	3	244		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	1							
Funding received from At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acacia Training ■ Ervanti ■ Tempest training Limited ■ JHC Skills for Business ■ Nurture 4 Growth ■ Stanford Management Processes ■ Employer Training Solutions ■ Train Together ■ NCC Skills ■ The Priory trust 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

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The above team was assisted by the Director of Planning and Performance, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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