

# Inspection of First College

Inspection dates:

28 February to 3 March 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

The East Lindsey Information Technology Centre, trading as First College, operates as a non-profit-making charitable trust. It supports unemployed people through various initiatives and is an independent learning provider.

First College trains apprentices and adult learners. There are just under 100 apprentices currently in training, who study at level 2, 3, 4 or 5. The vast majority study level 3 courses. Apprentices study courses in accountancy, business, customer service, team leading, education, early years or hospitality. There are 10 adult learners who study the supporting teaching and learning in schools award at level 3.

First College works with one subcontractor, City of Lincoln Council (CLC), which has 18 apprentices in training.

Most apprentices, including those with CLC, are adults, with a very small number aged under 18.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Apprentices and learners enjoy their studies. They value their training as it helps them to overcome personal barriers, become more confident and secure new job roles.

Assessors support apprentices and learners effectively so they can perform better in their job roles. Apprentices and learners are rightly satisfied with the quality of their training as it is relevant to their workplaces.

Apprentices and learners gain valuable knowledge and skills that prepare them well for their careers. For example, business administration apprentices can now manage large corporate events.

Leaders have close links with employers that add relevance to training. For example, in response to employer need, leaders ensure that hospitality apprentices complete additional qualifications in food hygiene and food allergy.

Employers find apprentices and learners to be 'assets' to their organisations and valued team members. Apprentices and learners speak with pride about how their courses help them become more confident in their job roles. Teaching assistant apprentices make meaningful contributions to the development of their pupils.

Apprentices and learners feel safe and well supported on their courses and in their workplace. They know to speak to their assessor or line manager should they have any concerns.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders work successfully with a range of stakeholders, such as the Coastal Community Fund, the NHS and local authorities. Leaders adopt suitable courses to meet skills shortages. For example, the level 3 supporting teaching and learning course offers a route into employment for adult learners. This helps fill vacant teaching assistant roles in schools.

Leaders and assessors plan the curriculum well and teach it in a logical sequence. Apprentices and learners gain a sound understanding of key topics that they can then apply in their workplaces. Apprentices learn about Gantt charts before they undertake project work, and adult learners study safeguarding before they work with children in schools.

Apprentices benefit from comprehensive reviews that take place with employer input. Training develops apprentices' knowledge and skills effectively and adds value to the employer's company. For example, business administration apprentices build copyright licensing databases that improve audit compliance.

Most training takes place on an individual basis and helps apprentices and learners to make sound progress with their studies. A small number of apprentices also attend group workshops that further broaden their knowledge about other workplace settings and practices.

Assessors create a calm and professional environment for learning. They know their apprentices and learners well, and understand their workplace job roles. Consequently, there are trusting relationships that enable apprentices and learners to make good progress.

Most apprentices and learners have positive attitudes towards their training. Assessors provide effective support for any individuals who find it difficult to learn or are less well motivated, such as help with note-taking or personal organisation.

Assessors have extensive, relevant expertise, and this helps apprentices and learners gain a sound understanding of key topics. For example, teaching assistant apprentices gain an effective working knowledge of the national curriculum.

Assessors make sure that apprentices and learners grasp key concepts. They break down complex learning, such as data manipulation, into bite-sized chunks and revisit previous learning in progress reviews.

Assessors check that apprentices and learners develop the knowledge and skills they need for their job roles effectively. Professional discussions and reflective journals check understanding and identify knowledge gaps. However, assessors do not always do enough to deepen knowledge and understanding beyond the course requirements.

The curriculum caters appropriately for any apprentices or learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders provide more in-person training for those with a hearing impairment. Although there are currently no apprentices or learners with SEND, leaders have suitably qualified staff and policies in place.

Apprentices and learners produce work to a good standard and speak confidently about the progress they make. Customer service apprentices can now appease angry customers more skilfully through the use of tone of voice and body language, and teaching assistant apprentices know about childhood illnesses in more detail.

Most apprentices and learners achieve their qualifications with high grades. They are well prepared for their next steps, and most progress to positive destinations. Apprentices secure permanent job roles in the sector.

Apprentices and learners have an appropriate understanding of citizenship and fundamental British values. They adopt these values in their workplaces. For example, apprentices treat all housing applicants with the same respect, regardless of circumstances.

Apprentices and learners have access to a wide range of useful health and well-being courses. Most complete these as additional learning, and this enhances their understanding of how to stay healthy.

Leaders encourage apprentices and learners to participate in enrichment activities in the community, such as by making donations to local food banks and volunteering. However, leaders do not know how many take part in these opportunities to contribute to society.

Assessors provide helpful careers guidance. Most apprentices and learners have a good understanding about what their next steps may be. However, apprentices and learners do not benefit from careers advice that extends beyond their immediate progression plans.

Leaders are ambitious to provide training in an area of considerable deprivation to upskill people and regenerate the economy. They set high expectations for their staff, and a strong learner-first focus cascades through the organisation.

Quality assurance is appropriate, with suitable activity that includes oversight of subcontracted provision. Monthly standardisation meetings consider end-of-course assessment outcomes, and working groups develop guides about off-the-job training requirements.

Assessors benefit from frequent professional development that helps them teach sound and effective course-related training. However, there has been less focus on assessors' teaching and assessment strategies to enable apprentices and learners to gain more depth of understanding for their future careers.

Trustees are passionate about their roles. They have relevant experience that they use well to provide support and challenge to leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There are appropriate safeguarding policies and reporting processes. Safer recruitment takes place, with enhanced checks for staff in learner-facing roles. Safeguarding checks form part of due diligence for the subcontracting partner, CLC.

Staff undertake suitable training and receive further relevant updates via staff newsletters. Staff also attend training with regional 'Prevent' duty officers.

Assessors introduce apprentices and learners to the importance of safeguarding at the start of their course. Relevant workplace policies, such as for health and safety and bullying and harassment, further reinforce awareness.

Apprentices and learners have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding, including risks in their workplaces and the locality.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders should review ways in which the curriculum content and design could provide more breadth and depth of learning.
- Leaders should help assessors become more skilled in ways to deepen knowledge and understanding beyond course requirements.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices and learners receive sufficient careers advice about future opportunities beyond their current job roles or immediate progression plans.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	51841
<b>Address</b>	North Parade Skegness Lincolnshire PE25 1BY
<b>Contact number</b>	01754 766341
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://firstcollegelincs.co.uk">https://firstcollegelincs.co.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Sheila Blackett (Learning Contracts Manager)
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 March 2016
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	City of Lincoln Council

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the learning contracts manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

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