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New College Stamford



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
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Inspection report

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: New College Stamford

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Miles Dibsdall

Address of college: Drift Road, Stamford, Lincolnshire PE9 1XA

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Chair of governors: Pat Friend

Unique reference number: 130760

Name of lead inspector: Lynda Cole, ALI

Dates of inspection: 13 – 17 November 2006

Background of the organisation

1. New College Stamford is a small general further education college that serves a mainly rural area and is situated at the southernmost point of Lincolnshire. The college recruits mainly from within a 20 mile radius of Stamford. Employment is predominantly in the service industries, but with a significant concentration of food processing in the eastern part of the college's area.
2. The college is located within a mile of three other county boundaries and recruits almost half of its full-time learners from Rutland, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. The college subsidises bus services from these three counties. All full-time provision, approximately 1,300 learners, and some 20% of part-time provision, approximately 3,000 learners, are located on the main college site at Drift Road, Stamford. The college has an adult learning centre in Spalding which provides a variety of part-time programmes, mainly in information technology (IT). Wake House in Bourne also provides IT courses.
3. In 2004/05, there were 18,734 enrolments onto individual courses. Of these, 12,527 learners were aged 16-18 and 6,207 were adult learners. There is no provision in agriculture, engineering or construction. The curriculum ranges from entry level to degree courses. GCSE mathematics and English are available for full-time learners to meet the entry requirements of higher education and employment. Full-time learners account for around 80% of total activity. The college has five franchise partners delivering English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Skills for Life and teaching assistants certificates in six community locations. There is no provision for apprentices in work-based learning or Entry 2 Employment. The college provides off-the-job training for apprentices for a local work-based learning provider.
4. The college's mission is 'to provide the means for our learners to achieve their full potential for progress and employability to support the local and national economy for the future'.

Scope of the inspection

5. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

6. Achievements are good. Success rates have improved. College data for 2005/06 show that all success rates are above national averages. In particular, success rates for adults on level 1 long courses have improved significantly between 2004/05 and 2005/06. Standards of work are generally satisfactory with good practical skills development on vocational courses. Key skills success rates have improved significantly.
7. Teaching and learning are good overall. In most lessons, learners work hard and are highly motivated. Lessons provide a wide variety of interesting activities for learners. However, in some lessons, teachers do not use these activities to develop and plan learning adequately enough. Teachers monitor learners' progress carefully. Assessment is very thorough.
8. Educational and social inclusion are good. The college meets the requirements of equality and diversity legislation. The college provides a wide range of courses. It has developed effective links with employers, schools and the wider community to extend provision for learners aged 14-16 and to widen participation. The wide range of enrichment activities enhances learners' development. Teachers integrate literacy and numeracy well into learners' courses.
9. Guidance and support are outstanding. Advice and guidance are particularly comprehensive. Very thorough initial assessment identifies learners' additional learning needs effectively. Specialist additional support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs is excellent. The co-ordination between pastoral and academic staff is excellent. Support for the most vulnerable learners is exceptional.
10. Leadership and management are good. The new principal and leadership team, and managers, are building on the success of the college in raising achievements to meet changes in demands. Day-to-day operational management is good. Appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place. Self-assessment is largely accurate although the quality is too variable. Governance is good and financial management is very good. Value for money is good.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

11. The college shows good capacity for further improvement. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. However, variability in its quality limits its usefulness as an effective means of directing improvement. Staff, governors and the local community support strongly the very good strategic plan. It responds imaginatively and effectively to local needs and national initiatives. This forms the basis of detailed plans to identify the actions required and any resources

necessary for implementation. New, recent changes to the leadership and management of the college are already demonstrating improvements, building on the successful track record of raising standards of achievement.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

12. The college has made good progress in tackling the issues raised at the last inspection. Levels of success have improved across the college. The college has recently increased efforts to respond to changes in local needs. It has significantly improved the number and availability of computers, and has developed an intranet resource to support teaching and learning. However, managers have identified that there is not enough use of these resources. Staff effectively integrate the teaching of key skills within courses. New staff are well supported. Staff implement policies to promote equality and diversity effectively. Student advisers and curriculum tutors have made substantial improvements to the effectiveness of monitoring learners' targets.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- very clear vision and dynamic leadership
- good and improving success rates
- highly effective arrangements for monitoring and promoting equality and diversity
- outstanding additional learning support
- extremely thorough monitoring of learners' progress
- good provision for enrichment and the development of learners' key skills.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- retention rates on a few two year vocational programmes in 2004/05
- the planning for, and development of, learning
- the quality of self-assessment.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

13. Achievements are good. Overall success rates increased significantly between 2002/03 and 2004/05 and are above national averages. College data show continued improvement in 2005/06. Most courses show improving success rates. Where success rates have declined slightly, they are still above national averages. All success rates for adults are above the national averages. Success rates for adult learners on level 1 long courses have improved very significantly between 2004/05 and 2005/06. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 on level 2 long courses continue to show an improving trend.
14. At level 3, success rates have also continued to improve for both adult learners and learners aged 16-18 on long courses. These represent half of the full-time enrolments. Most courses show good retention and achievement rates. However, retention rates on a few two year vocational programmes, particularly BTEC National Diplomas, are unsatisfactory. Learners on GCE A level programmes make better than expected progress based on their GCSE performance at the start of their courses.
15. Success rates for adults on short courses have improved. However, success rates for learners aged 16-18 on short courses have declined slightly but very short course success rates remain significantly above national averages.
16. Attendance has improved and is generally high. It is particularly good in art and design. Learners are well motivated and enjoy learning and behaviour has improved. Standards of work are generally satisfactory with good practical work in some areas. As recognised by the college in the self-assessment report, learners gain valuable additional employability skills. Progression rates are satisfactory and a significant number of learners move on to higher education courses at the college. Learners aged 14-16 are making satisfactory progress overall with some good achievement of vocational qualifications and increased progression to full-time courses at the college.
17. The small numbers of learners on national vocational qualification (NVO) provision offered as work-based learning make good progress.
18. Key skills success rates have improved significantly overall. In particular, success rates on level 2 application of number and communications have improved considerably since 2004/05.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

19. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but varies between different courses. The college correctly identified that its lesson observation procedures were not providing a suitably thorough overall analysis of the quality of teaching and learning. Recent lesson observations using a revised system provide accurate judgements on the characteristics of individual lessons. However, it is too early to assess their impact on the overall standard of teaching and learning. In most lessons, learners work hard, participate fully in their learning and are highly motivated by activities to help develop their knowledge and understanding. Teachers use varied and interesting activities to make lessons more enjoyable. However, teachers do not always use these activities to develop and plan learning adequately. The college correctly identifies in the self-assessment report that the level of challenge to learners and the checks on learning in lessons are areas for development.
20. Teachers take full account of the diverse backgrounds of their learners and develop well learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Learning support assistants receive detailed information about individual learners' needs and provide valuable and sensitive support in lessons. Learners adopt safe and healthy work practices. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Learners' access to computers has improved and teachers are making more effective use of information learning technology in lessons.
21. Learners make good progress in developing their key skills. Arrangements for the integrated development of key skills are effective.
22. The college has good systems for monitoring learners' progress. Regular progress reviews incorporate a well developed system of targets based on learners' attainment at the start of their course. Subject teachers and student advisers frequently and effectively review these targets through individual learning plans. Full-time learners understand the system well and it helps them make progress. Adult learners also have individual learning plans, and although the targets they contain are more general, they provide a useful means of assessing progress. Assessment practices are very thorough and meet awarding body requirements fully. Internal verification uses an appropriate sampling strategy and is very effective. Learners' assignments are well constructed and relevant. Teachers on most courses provide detailed comments on how learners can improve their work.
23. The college is good at meeting the needs and interests of learners, attracting learners from a very wide geographical area. The college offers clear progression routes to work, further and higher education. Provision for full-time and part-time learners in three established vocational areas is particularly strong, and well supported by good links with employers. The college has taken steps to meet the needs of a wider range of learners through more level 1 courses and greater opportunities for part-time learners. Recently introduced

community initiatives have been particularly effective in widening participation for disadvantaged adult learners.

24. The enrichment programme for full-time learners relates well to learners' main areas of study. It extends learners' skills and understanding through additional project work, outside visits and other activities, and adds to their enjoyment of the course. It also enables learners to gain additional qualifications to improve their employability and achieve economic wellbeing. Topics addressed through the tutorial programme make a strong contribution to the personal development, health and safety, and employability of young people. Tutorial sessions reinforce the college's anti-bullying and equal opportunities policies very well. Tutorials ensure learners understand their rights and responsibilities.
25. Staff have been especially effective in building provision for school age learners, and more recently, in extending community-based provision. The college works with local schools to provide a good vocational link course for learners aged 14-16, a very successful full-time programme for non-attenders aged 14-16 and an accredited teaching assistants course. Community provision includes English language courses delivered through franchise partners for the large local community of migrant workers and for Asian women in Peterborough.
26. The college recognises that the range of its curriculum does not fully meet the future skills needs of the region. Senior managers plan to strengthen links with a wider range of employers, particularly in construction and engineering, extend opportunities for work-based learning and provide more flexible courses for adult learners.
27. Guidance and support are outstanding both in college and in community locations. Learners receive comprehensive information and highly effective advice and guidance to ensure they are on the right course. The college provides extensive transport and works effectively with transport service providers across the county to enable learners in rural locations to access college courses easily.
28. Particularly thorough initial assessment identifies learners' additional learning needs effectively. Specialist additional support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs is excellent and support for learners of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is very good.
29. Arrangements for ensuring pastoral and academic support are excellent. The college coordinates these two aspects extremely well and they enable all learners to reach their full potential. Student advisers provide outstanding support for a wide range of learners' additional needs and make effective links with an extensive range of services available across the college and with external specialist providers. Tutorial support is very good. A wide range of staff contribute to effective target setting with full-time learners through individual learning plans. Support for the most vulnerable learners such as those with learning disabilities and difficulties, low self-esteem or low prior attainment is

exceptional. College staff work particularly well to support learners with hearing and visual impairments. Arrangements to support looked-after children are also good.

30. Curriculum staff identify carefully the risks likely to impact on learners leaving courses early, and determine effectively the most appropriate level of targeted support that significantly improves their achievement.
31. Student advisers provide good advice and prepare learners well for career progression. Learners' services provide a wide range of services. The college provides good childcare provision on its main site. Links with parents are good.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

32. Leadership and management are good. The new principal and leadership team, and managers, are building on the success of the college in raising achievements. They plan well to meet changes in further education. The principal has very rapidly gained the enthusiastic support of learners, staff and the local community for very clear and dynamic proposals outlined in the strategic plan. Local schools are keen to work with the college on these developments.
33. Curriculum management is good and contributes well to improving learners' achievements. Management of additional learning support provision is outstanding. Very thorough monitoring of learners' needs allows the college to provide prompt and effective support.
34. A wide range of quality assurance procedures is in place. The college has correctly identified that some areas require further action to ensure they meet high standards consistently. Self-assessment is largely accurate. However, the quality is too variable in highlighting key strengths and areas for improvement upon which effective improvement plans can be made. The moderation of curriculum self-assessment reports improves the quality, and provides necessary information for further development. The observation of teaching and learning has improved. There has been a significant improvement in the availability and use of management information. It is helping staff to identify more clearly where retention is poor.
35. There are appropriate arrangements concerning child protection, including regular training for staff and governors. The college is aware that it needs to monitor the way it informs all staff of its procedures during their induction. It maintains a single central register of staff recruitment with appropriate criminal background checks. The college fulfils its responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) and the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001). It actively monitors learners' recruitment and achievement information and successfully promotes equality and diversity through staff training.

36. The college has improved accommodation and resources. The qualifications and experience of staff match well with the requirements of the programmes offered and the range of learners. Induction of new staff is effective and there is a strong emphasis on continued staff training. Appraisal procedures are satisfactory and there are well advanced plans to develop these in line with broader college management changes.
37. Governors contribute well to the developing strategic plan, providing helpful yet supportive challenge to proposals. They receive a wide range of information and have a broad understanding of the college's strengths and areas for improvement.
38. Financial management and planning are very effective. The college provides good value for money.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	02/03	508	63.6	56.1	7.5	1154	49.8	54.9	-5.1
	03/04	702	67.4	60.3	7.1	963	42.1	59.1	-17
	04/05	535	77	64.2	12.8	847	46.9	61.6	-14.7
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	33	66.7	59.1	7.6	2	50.0	45.7	4.3
	03/04	27	59.3	64.6	-5.3	3	100.0	49.7	50.3
	04/05	27	74.1	67.8	6.3	1	100.0	58.6	41.4
NVQs	02/03	74	78.4	56.2	22.2	10	80.0	58.9	21.1
	03/04	141	53.9	61.6	-7.7	14	64.3	67.2	-2.9
	04/05	131	82.4	67.6	14.8	35	71.4	70.2	1.2
Other	02/03	1252	74	63.5	10.5	1803	53.2	70.2	-17.0
	03/04	1197	72.0	68.2	3.8	1349	49.3	75.8	-26.5
	04/05	894	83.1	70.1	13.0	1107	50.6	77.0	26.4

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	02/03	835	63.5	51.6	11.9	809	44.5	49.2	-4.7
	03/04	771	65.2	56.3	8.9	532	63.3	53.6	9.7
	04/05	726	66.0	60.9	5.1	540	68.5	59.5	9.0
GCSEs	02/03	113	52.2	57.9	-5.7	115	63.5	59.5	4.0
	03/04	83	77.1	62.0	15.1	122	70.5	63.0	7.5
	04/05	89	67.4	64.6	2.8	128	68.0	55.8	12.2
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	337	71.2	59.4	11.8	25	56.0	68.8	-12.8
	03/04	61	65.6	63.3	2.3	86	83.7	76.2	7.5
	04/05	66	56.1	67.7	-11.6	55	78.2	82.9	-4.7
NVQs	02/03	155	59.4	42.8	16.6	94	60.6	50.4	10.2
	03/04	169	60.9	52.5	8.4	165	67.9	56.1	11.8
	04/05	182	69.2	57.5	11.7	196	77.0	62.5	14.5
Other	02/03	737	72.2	56.0	16.2	857	41.8	62.3	-20.5
	03/04	490	64.9	58.3	6.6	426	53.3	66.0	-12.7
	04/05	416	67.1	63.3	3.8	408	70.6	70.8	-0.2

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	02/03	1333	65.1	61.6	3.5	418	59.3	50.7	8.6
	03/04	1330	66.3	64.1	2.2	409	61.1	53.5	7.6
	04/05	1341	69.2	76.5	-7.3	389	66.3	57.3	9.0
A/A2 Levels	02/03	291	79.0	81.6	-2.6	43	69.8	62.6	7.2
	03/04	204	82.8	83.6	-0.8	11	63.6	65.4	-1.8
	04/05	298	83.9	85.5	-1.6	42	64.3	68.8	-4.5
AS Levels	02/03	630	60.6	61.0	-0.4	57	45.6	48.3	-2.7
	03/04	698	63.8	63.0	0.8	71	45.1	49.7	-4.6
	04/05	577	65.5	65.5	0.0	62	46.8	52.3	-5.5
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	199	57.8	49.8	8.0	6	66.7	45.1	21.6
	03/04	71	59.2	52.3	6.9	1	100	43.9	56.1
	04/05	47	61.7	60.2	1.5	1	100	53.2	46.8
NVQs	02/03	15	73.3	49.9	23.4	86	46.4	44.4	2.0
	03/04	20	90.0	53.4	36.6	68	64.7	47.4	17.3
	04/05	34	88.2	62.3	25.9	71	60.6	54.5	6.1
Other	02/03	200	66.0	57.1	8.9	437	72.3	61.1	11.2
	03/04	343	61.8	57.5	4.3	324	67.6	62.5	5.1
	04/05	386	62.4	60.8	1.6	250	71.2	65.4	5.8