



Foxes Academy



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published November 2006	Provider reference 50023
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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Foxes Academy

Type of college: Independent specialist

Principal: Maureen Tyler-Moore

Address of college: The Esplanade
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Chair of governors: n/a

Unique reference number: 131892

Name of lead inspector: Susan Preece, HMI

Dates of inspection: 3-5 October 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Foxes Academy is a specialist residential college based in Minehead Somerset which also operates as a fully functioning hotel for the general public. It is an independent limited company run by directors. The college currently trains 56 learners between 18 and 27 years of age. Some 39 of these learners are funded in total by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There are a further 15 learners who are part funded by LSC and social services. Of the 56 learners, 36 are female and 20 are male, and only one is from a minority ethnic group.
2. The college provides a realistic working environment for learners with moderate learning difficulties who wish to progress to part-time or full-time employment in hospitality and catering. Most learners follow a three year programme. In the first two years, they focus on improving their independent living and social skills, and follow vocational options in hospitality and catering. In the third year, learners can take National Vocational Qualification (NVO) level 1 in four different areas of hospitality and catering: food preparation and cooking; food and drink service; housekeeping and multi-skilled hospitality services. During their final year at Foxes, learners take the certificate in food hygiene. The final term is spent in a work placement, which may be with a local employer in the town.
3. The majority of learners progress to employment as their preferred option. Many of those who do not go directly into employment take up higher level courses or voluntary work. The college's mission is to 'provide training and care for our students, to the highest possible standard in a wide range of areas and to help students integrate with society and be seen as valuable people who have skills to contribute'.

Scope of the inspection

4. 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
 - specialist provision in vocational skills.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding : grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding : grade 1
Achievements and standards	Outstanding : grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding : grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding : grade 1

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.

Curriculum areas

Vocational Skills	Outstanding : grade 1
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

5. This is an outstanding college. Levels of achievement are outstanding. Learners make very good progress in a range of national awards and in their communication and personal skills. The college makes very effective use of both achievement and destination data. The RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) initiative is well established. Data for the past three years indicates that over 70% of third year leavers go into full- or part-time employment. Many of those who do not go directly into employment take up higher level courses or voluntary work. Nearly all learners progress to an independent or semi-independent living environment.
6. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Highly relevant activities are successfully used to enhance learners' employability. Comprehensive assessment processes successfully inform individual learning plans. Very good application of specialist teaching expertise supports development in Skills for Life and vocational areas. Staff have high but realistic expectations for all learners.
7. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. The college is strongly committed to equality and diversity. Staff are trained in its promotion and Foxes is compliant with equalities legislation. The curriculum provides clear progression routes. The use of realistic contexts for learning is particularly effective. Skills for Life is successfully embedded across all aspects of the learners' programmes. A good range of enrichment activities and work experience placements are available. A culture of mutual respect and an adult focus permeates the provision.
8. Support and guidance for learners is good. Pre-entry information and induction for new learners is good and learners benefit from comprehensive induction procedures and regular tutorials. The transition programme is not fully coherent. Learners do not have direct access to a careers library. Regular meetings ensure that learners share their views but there is no forum for them to have a corporate voice.
9. Leadership and management are outstanding. The two directors provide inspirational leadership within a positive and supportive culture. Strategic planning is very effective and the college's attention to the health and safety of learners is outstanding. Quality assurance systems are comprehensive and robust. Self-assessment is critical and leads to significant improvements. Comprehensive procedures are in place to promote the safety, wellbeing and protection of individual learners.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

10. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. Inspirational leadership, highly supportive managers and excellent team work contribute to the success of the college. Staff work with the wellbeing of their learners at heart. Quality assurance processes are comprehensive, robust and have been used successfully to tackle weaknesses.
11. There is a well established culture of continuous improvement which includes regular session and peer observations. These have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Challenging targets are set to bring about improvement and plans for achieving these are realistic. Management information systems are effective and are being developed very well to assist with the collation and analysis of information. Inspectors agree that the college's self-assessment report is mainly accurate but does not sufficiently acknowledge the college's areas of success.

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

12. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing the key issues from the last inspection. Active steps have been taken to promote all aspects of equality and diversity. The Skills for Life curriculum is now very well embedded throughout the curriculum. Professional training and development are very good. Initial assessment has developed significantly and successfully informs individual learning plans. The monitoring of learners' progress is very good and target setting is particularly effective. Quality assurance arrangements are very well established and successfully identify areas for improvement. Teaching resources in information and communication technology (ICT) and their use are now very good. However, the college has yet to improve its careers library.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- outstanding levels of achievement in national awards
- highly effective teaching
- innovative use of learning environments
- outstanding rate of progression into employment
- robust systems and high priority given to health and safety
- comprehensive and rigorous quality improvement processes
- outstanding and inspirational leadership.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the coherence of transition programmes
- the opportunities for learners to have a corporate voice.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

13. Learner achievements are outstanding overall. A good range of nationally accredited qualifications enables learners' progress to be acknowledged and celebrated. Successes include full NVQ awards, literacy and numeracy awards and food hygiene certificates. Standards have been maintained over time and are rising. All learners are working towards national vocational qualifications at level 1. There are very good achievements in all vocational areas and Skills for Life. Over the past two years all learners entered for a full vocational award have been successful. Improved opportunities have been made available for learners to gain Skills for Life qualifications. Pass rates on literacy (95%) and numeracy courses (100%) are very good. All learners have the opportunity of working towards a basic food hygiene certificate during the final year of their programme at Foxes.
14. Learners can also gain pre-entry level qualifications and in-house certification. All learners' achievements receive positive recognition, for example from effective evaluations between learner and tutor, external verification, and high profile award ceremonies such as the summer graduation ball. Learners develop highly effective personal and social skills; they gain in confidence and are able to participate actively as members of the wider community. Behaviour management is very good and further promotes learning. The RARPA staged framework is well applied and effectively used so that the college can have confidence in the processes and outcomes for a range of skills and achievements. Learners confidently tell inspectors of their gains and are proud of their progress.
15. Staff place significant emphasis on enabling learners to understand their own negotiated learning journey; expectations are high but realistic. Potential learners attend for a five day assessment. The comprehensive and detailed initial assessment is further developed by the gathering of baseline information during the first half term. Outcomes are rigorously analysed and used effectively to establish individual learning plans. These are formally reviewed each term and updated as necessary. Learners are actively involved in setting targets to form the basis for these plans. In 2005/06 the college recognised that the vocational targets set were too challenging and amended them. The college identifies that 82% of overall learner targets, as set in individual learning plans, are achieved. A realistic target for next year has been set for 90% success.
16. Very good use is made of the outcomes of achievement, retention and destination data to inform curriculum planning and development. Destination data for the past three years indicates that on average over 70% of third year leavers go into full- or part-time employment. Most of those who do not go

directly into employment take up higher level courses or voluntary work (13%). Nearly all learners progress to an independent or semi-independent living environment. Attendance was very good at 100% during the week of inspection.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

17. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall. A significant number of practical sessions are outstanding. The college underestimates the quality of its teaching and learning in the self-assessment report. Teachers prepare well for their lessons. Vocational tutors make very effective use of their catering experience and the excellent resources available to them to make learning highly relevant to enable learners to master the skills they will need to gain employment. Learners value teachers' hard work and enthusiasm for their success.
18. Lessons have clear objectives which build on previous learning. Inspectors agree with the self-assessment report that students enjoy their learning and benefit from a range of teaching methods. Lesson planning is exemplary and skilful use of questioning encourages learners to participate. For example, in a lesson in which learners were planning to visit a local supermarket, the teacher re-capped how to ask questions to gain the information required. Learners were clearly aware of what was expected of them. They were also knowledgeable and realistic about their own levels of road safety skills and were able to accurately describe these to each other. The use of ICT to enhance learning is good. Staff learner interactions are characterised by mutual respect and an adult focus.
19. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively and have a good understanding of their role but some interventions do not actively support learning. For example, in a minority of lessons, learning support assistants were over directive. There is very good communication between education and care staff. The management of learners' behaviour is very good. Initial assessment is detailed and rigorous and the outcomes are successfully used to inform individual programmes. A range of assessment summaries and reports enable staff to accurately and clearly measure the progress learners make.
20. The college response to meeting the needs and interests of learners and to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. Although only 2% of the learner population is from an ethnic minority group, the college has developed strategies for positive action. Learners are represented on the college's disability awareness working group. A comprehensive and detailed curriculum framework provides clear routes for progression. The college has particular success in supporting learners to gain employment. Processes for internal verification are rigorous and comprehensive. All sessions are taught in a real, relevant and practical way. The daily timetable for all learners is based on typical shifts of the hospitality and catering industry. Learners are trained in the

hotel and have to deal with the public from the start of the course. This training is reinforced by the daily living and social skills used by learners when running their own residences. Skills for Life is fully embedded across vocational areas in the hotel, on the residential houses, and is well promoted within discrete literacy and numeracy lessons. Data from 2005/06 indicate that learners achieved 87% of their literacy and 89% of their numeracy targets. The college does not teach key skills.

21. A good range of enrichment activities and sports contributes to learners' enjoyment. These include access to gym sessions, cinema, drama club, bowling, theatre and pub visits, art club, treasure hunts and discos. Learners are making a positive contribution locally through charitable fund raising events and raising the profile of learners with disabilities. They engage well with the local community, both by going out into the local towns and by interacting with members of the public who use the hotel. Opportunities to participate in external work placements are very good. An understanding of a healthy lifestyle is well promoted throughout the curriculum. Young people have good opportunities to learn about managing their own finances. Comprehensive and detailed risk assessments are undertaken for all learners, activities and venues.
22. Support and guidance for learners are good. Very effective pre-entry information and guidance, provided in a variety of adapted media, and a thorough induction process assist learners to settle quickly into college life. Guidance documents ensure that learners are well informed. The learner contract and handbook sets out clearly their responsibilities and rights and explains the complaints procedures. The extremely good initial assessment clearly identifies learners' support needs, including their levels of basic skills. Staff know their learners particularly well. Tutorial guidelines are clear and learners benefit greatly from the regular timetabled sessions and informal opportunities to meet with staff. Behaviour management strategies are well established and procedures to ensure effective communication between house and hotel staff are very good. Access to a range of specialist external support agencies is good overall. The college seeks out additional multi disciplinary support when required and is currently working to identify and develop a wider portfolio of useful external specialist support.
23. The college has significantly improved its transition programme. Although it has expanded the length of the programme and type of activities, the transition programme is not fully coherent between the main strands of the programme. Links have been established with the local Connexions service and Job Centre Plus. However, there is still no careers library directly available within the college to enable learners to explore careers independently. This was highlighted in the previous inspection report.
24. Learners' individual views are regularly sought and acted upon to bring about improvements but they do not have a corporate voice through, for example, a learner council. In the regular house meetings, learners set the agenda and are

able to bring about change, for example, in setting up a mutually agreed rota for use of the computers.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

25. Leadership and management are outstanding. The two directors provide inspirational leadership within a positive and supportive culture. Staff have significant confidence in their leaders and are fully committed to the strategic direction of the college. Most have a good understanding of how changes will bring further benefits to learners and staff. Strategic planning and development are clear and comprehensive. For example, the strategic plan, three year development plan and self-assessment report all have linked, detailed action plans which are reviewed termly. Managers are highly effective; clear accountabilities and training have supported them in successfully raising standards since the last inspection.
26. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and rigorous. The college has introduced a clear audit plan and undertakes monthly reviews of policies. A very well developed lesson observation programme and peer observations have had significant impact on the quality of the learners' experience. Management information systems are effective and are developing very well to assist with the collation and analysis of information. The college's self-assessment process is fully inclusive, involving all staff and learners. Managers at all levels are clear about where further improvements are necessary. However, the self-assessment report does not sufficiently acknowledge the college's successes. Attention to health and safety issues is outstanding. Rigorous and detailed risk assessments and checks are carried out for all aspects of the provision. Curriculum management is outstanding and specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation are all of a high standard and are used to best effect.
27. Very effective links have been established with the local community. Stakeholders are particularly active in sharing their knowledge and skills through training events with both staff and learners. Links with local employers are very good and provide learners with excellent opportunities to practice their vocational skills in an open employment setting. Collaborative partnerships have been established with other specialist and further education (FE) colleges. Foxes offers taster programmes for general FE learners who are interested in catering.
28. Staff are well qualified and experienced. All vocational tutors hold or are working towards an appropriate teaching qualification and learner support staff hold NVQ level 2, or above. Most staff have achieved or are working towards national awards in literacy or numeracy. A very good range of professional development opportunities is available for all staff. Training is clearly linked to strategic objectives. There is a well established induction and appraisal process with mid term meetings included in the process.

29. The very good focus on the promotion of equality of opportunity permeates across all aspects of the college. In 2004, the college achieved a British National Diversity award. Comprehensive procedures are in place to safeguard all learners. All staff are CRB checked and a comprehensive staff record of recruitment and vetting procedures is maintained centrally. The college meets the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Plans to meet the requirements of the forthcoming Disability Equality Scheme are well advanced.
30. Support needs identified on the learner schedules are well monitored. Financial management is effective. The college provides excellent value for money.

Curriculum area inspections

Vocational Skills

Outstanding: grade 1

Context

31. All learners develop employment related skills. Practical work is focused on learners progressing to NVQ at level 1 in four areas: hospitality and catering; food preparation and cooking; food & drink service; housekeeping and multi-skilled hospitality services. Most of the learners in year three undertake external work experience. Skills for Life is integrated into practical lessons and the college also provides additional discrete lessons. The extended curriculum, delivered in the residential houses, is designed to support learners to further develop their confidence, self-esteem and independent living skills.

STRENGTHS

- high success rates in national awards
- high standard of learners' work in relation to their targets
- outstanding teaching
- outstanding promotion of health and safety
- high quality and use of resources, particularly hotel
- good curriculum management
- outstanding progression to employment.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- the management of learning support assistants.

Achievements and standards

32. In 2005 and 2006 all learners entered for national awards were successful. Learners perform very well in the practical lessons in the hotel. The standard of learners' work in lessons is high. They demonstrate a clear understanding of health and safety and its implications in all their work. Learners are proud of their achievements and take pleasure in using their communication skills to describe the progress they have made. They respond positively to the high level of challenge which is provided by their teachers. Learners develop self-esteem and self-confidence through their work in the hotel and the residences. Over 70% of leavers annually progress to full- or part-time employment. Many of those who do not go directly into employment take up higher level courses or voluntary work.

Quality of provision

33. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Planning for teaching is exemplary. Teachers effectively link vocational outcomes with skills for life targets and learners' individual personal and social targets. Lessons are clearly differentiated to meet individual learner needs across all aspects of the curriculum. Teachers use appropriate strategies to enable learners to make the most of their experiences in the hotel, residences and the wider community. The realistic environment of a working hotel is fully exploited as an outstanding teaching resource by well qualified and experienced teachers in the hotel industry. The majority of learning support staff assist learners effectively. However, in a minority of lessons, learning support staff are over-directive and do not allow learners to benefit from making mistakes. The teaching and reinforcement of health and safety are outstanding. Learning is rigorously assessed and internally verified. Feedback to learners is clear and unambiguous and reflects their adult status.
34. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. Learners express high levels of satisfaction with the programmes offered at Foxes. They value lessons and the range of social, recreational and personal development activities available to them. Support and guidance are good. Learners speak with enthusiasm of the personal support from teachers and residential staff. Behaviour management is effective with learners clearly aware of their behavioural targets.

Leadership and management

35. Leadership and management are outstanding. The senior managers responsible for the different aspects of the curriculum work effectively together to ensure that the curriculum is coherent and that good practice is successfully shared. Team working across the curriculum is very effective. Staff appraisal is well established and valued by teachers. Comprehensive staff development, particularly in relation to the national strategy for skills for life, helps to increase standards for learners. Staff value the development opportunities open to them. The self-assessment report did not identify all the key strengths and overstated the areas for improvement identified by inspectors.