



# Lincoln College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published March 2007	Provider reference 130762
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## Contents

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Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	5
<hr/>	
Overall judgement	6
Main findings	8

## Basic information about the college

Name of college: Lincoln College

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: John Allen

Address of college: Monks Road, Lincoln, LN2 5HQ

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Fax number: 01522 876200

Chair of governors: Ian Shaw

Unique reference number: 130762

Name of lead inspector: Bernard McDonald, ALI

Dates of inspection: 15 - 19 January 2007

## Background of the organisation

1. Lincoln College is a large general further education college in the East Midlands. The main site is in the centre of Lincoln, and there is a smaller site in Gainsborough, some 20 miles to the north-west. The college serves a wide geographical area. The college's mission is: to provide high quality lifelong learning opportunities for all the communities the college serves and in response to local, regional and national need.
2. The college enrolled 10,099 learners in 2005/06, of which 2,814 were 16-18 year olds and 7,285 were adults. Some 57% of learners are female and 5% have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, though low, is greater than in the area in which the college operates. The proportion of school leavers with five or more General Certificate of Education (GCSE) grades A\* - C in Lincoln in 2005 was 53.6%, below the national average of 56.3%. The unemployment rate in Lincoln is higher than the national average. The college offers provision in all of the LSC sector subject areas. The college's largest areas of learning, in terms of enrolments, are: preparation for life and work and health, public services and care. There are around 600 work-based learners, mainly in engineering and manufacturing technologies and in construction. The college is a Centre for Vocational Excellence in construction. The college is involved in contracts for Train to Gain, prison education and learndirect. It also provides training for 14-16 year olds. In addition to these LSC-funded learners, the college has over 160 full-time equivalent higher education learners.
3. Lincoln College formally merged with Newark and Sherwood College (Nottinghamshire) on 1 January 2007, a fortnight before the inspection began. The latter was inspected by Ofsted/ALI in November 2006. This inspection was concerned with Lincoln College as defined up to the point of merger.

## 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](http://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	Satisfactory: grade 3
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

5. This is a good college. Success rates have risen since the last inspection. Achievements and standards overall are satisfactory, and for learners aged 14-16, they are good. Overall success rates on long courses are mostly just above the national average. Success rates in work-based learning have risen since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. Internal progression from lower level courses is good. Attendance is satisfactory.
6. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that teaching and learning are good. There are effective systems for identifying good practice and sharing it. The initial assessment of learners is thorough and additional support helps learners to make good progress. The monitoring of learner progress is good and teachers take appropriate actions to help learners improve. Key skills are satisfactory overall. They are very well taught in some areas.
7. The college's overall approach to educational and social inclusion is good. In fact, the approach to social inclusion is outstanding. The college works very effectively with local partners to attract learners who are currently under-represented in education and training. The college's approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners is outstanding. The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of learners is good. A wide range of provision covers many community venues as well as the main sites. Guidance and support provided for learners are outstanding.
8. Leadership and management are good. The principal provides strong leadership, ably supported by the senior team. Governors make a very effective contribution to strategic planning and monitoring college performance. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Success rates are improving. Good financial and human resources management help ensure that the college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

9. The college's capacity to improve is good. Accurate management information is used to good effect to assist the robust planning and quality assurance processes. The college is highly self-critical and makes good use of peer evaluation to validate judgements and to share good practice. The self-assessment report was mainly accurate and clearly identified areas for improvement. Strong financial planning and control enable the college to generate funds for improvement. The college has a strong record of achieving or exceeding LSC funding targets. Over the last four years learner success rates have risen, but they are only just above the national average.

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

10. The college has made good progress in addressing areas identified for improvement during the last inspection. Considerable investment in accommodation has ensured much better access for learners with restricted mobility. Key skills have improved. The reinspection of work-based learning in 2005 resulted in satisfactory inspection grades and the management of this area is now good. Management information has improved significantly. Quality assurance processes have developed well to include a robust lesson observation system which is linked to performance review. Governors' training is better organised. Learners' take-up of basic skills support is good. Success rates have improved.

Key strengths of the college

*Strengths*

- good teaching and learning
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- very good support for learners and staff
- very productive partnerships
- good educational and outstanding social inclusion
- strong leadership and good strategic planning.

Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the need to continue to improve success rates on long courses.

## Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

*Contributory grades:*

*Learners aged 14-16*

*Good: grade 2*

11. Inspectors did not agree with the college's self-assessment that the overall standards achieved by learners are good, but they did agree with this judgement in relation to learners aged 14-16. Since the last inspection, success rates have improved on most courses, and overall rates have improved at a faster rate than the national average, although some started from a fairly low base. Overall success rates in 2005/06 on long courses have risen to a level which is just one or two points above the most recent national average, except for adults at level 1, where the rate remains well below.
12. Overall success rates for learners taking key skills are above the national average. Retention of learners on key skills programmes is good, and the success rates at level 1 are good, although there is room for improvement in the success rates at higher levels. Success rates of learners on GCE AS and A level courses are above the national average, although the proportion of GCSE learners who achieve high grades is well below.
13. There is an improving trend in achievements by females. The proportion of minority ethnic learners is too small for useful analysis to take place. Overall data in relation to value added is inconclusive.
14. Overall success rates in work-based learning are satisfactory. Success rates in business administration and law are very good, but this is a relatively small part of the provision. Although the overall success rate for advanced apprentices in 2005/06 appears to be low, at 26%, this is attributable to a group of learners who left their engineering apprenticeship very early in the programme, in 2001/02. Since then there has been a significant improvement in work-based learning and the current levels of retention are satisfactory. The college acknowledges the need to improve the proportion of learners who complete their framework within the agreed timescale.
15. The college offers a range of vocational courses for learners aged 14-16 from local schools. In construction, the pass rates are outstanding, and overall achievements are good. Progression rates within college for learners who succeed at entry level and at level 1 are good. Progression from level 2 is satisfactory.
16. Inspectors found the standard of learners' work to be mostly satisfactory and sometimes good. The acquisition of skills by work-based learners is good.



Attendance is improving. At the time of inspection it was 83%. Health and safety practices are very well observed.

## Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

17. The quality of provision is good. Inspectors agree with the college that teaching and learning are good. In addition to the careful monitoring carried out by managers, staff observe each other teaching, contributing to a shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching. Staff development is used effectively to encourage all staff to be aware of best practice.
18. Staff possess good subject knowledge. Most lessons are well planned, with careful thought given to activities that will stimulate interest. Resources to support learning are good. There is effective support for individual learners. Learners are able to apply their previous learning to help them understand new topics. Most teachers link theory well to the vocational context. There is good teaching of practical skills across many areas of the college including work-based learning. The use of information and communication technology is very effective in some lessons and satisfactory across the college as a whole. A quarter of lessons are satisfactory. In these lessons, learners are not developing sufficient confidence to contribute to oral discussion and to solve problems. There is often too much reliance on teacher explanation, followed by questions and answers where the teacher does most of the work.
19. There are good systems to assess learners' literacy and numeracy levels and to develop these skills further. All full-time and most part-time learners undertake an initial assessment, followed by more detailed diagnosis, where appropriate. Learners are then assigned to key skills according to need. Some also receive basic skills support, either in groups or individually. A minority of learners are not attending basic skills classes regularly, but for most learners the additional support helps them to make good progress. The college has improved the way key skills are provided. This is now satisfactory. In some curriculum areas, key skills are taught very effectively as part of the main course.
20. Monitoring of learner progress is good. Learners' work is generally marked regularly and comments provide helpful guidance on what learners need to do to further improve. In a few cases, work is not marked promptly or feedback is not sufficiently detailed. Most personal tutors hold regular meetings with individual learners to review their progress against targets. Occasionally learners' reviews do not take place within the required timescales. Reviews are recorded in individual learning plans and parents or guardians receive twice yearly progress reports. Personal tutors have easy access to information on the attendance and progress of learners. This helps them to take appropriate action if individuals are at risk of falling behind. For apprentices, training co-ordinators liaise closely with teachers and assessors on learner progress and employers are kept well informed.

21. The college's overall approach to educational and social inclusion is good, and the approach to social inclusion is outstanding. Pupils from 14 schools attend college for vocational training. The college focuses its community provision on areas of high deprivation. The proportion of minority ethnic learners exceeds that in the local community. The college works very effectively with local partners to attract learners who are currently under-represented in education and training. The college is successfully engaging employers who have traditionally been hard-to-reach. Education and training is provided in three local prisons. The college's approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners is outstanding.
22. The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of learners is good. It offers a wide range of provision which very effectively addresses LSC priorities and meets the needs of learners, employers and the community. The provision covers many community venues as well as the main sites. Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. There is a satisfactory range of apprenticeships.
23. The broad range of enrichment opportunities available for full-time learners includes excellent coverage of the Every Child Matters themes through group tutorials, and events around the college. Outcomes relating to the health and safety of learners are outstanding. Specific enrichment is also arranged in each curriculum area. There is insufficient monitoring of work experience in some vocational areas.
24. Advice, guidance and support for learners are outstanding. The college offers comprehensive, impartial and effective information advice and guidance to applicants, including ready access to a Connexions advisor. There are tasters for prospective learners. Appropriate arrangements are available for all applicants. Induction for full-time learners is comprehensive and very effective. There are very good tutorial arrangements. Parents and guardians are kept well informed about learner progress.
25. The excellent support for learners includes a comprehensive range of welfare services. There is an early assessment of any learner who declares a difficulty or disability, and there is very effective liaison with schools and relevant agencies to address these needs. Appropriate and effective support is arranged promptly at whatever stage the need is identified by a well qualified and experienced team.
26. Careers advice and guidance is very good, with Connexions advisors usually available. The college also has its own well qualified advice and guidance staff. There is particularly effective support for applicants to higher education. There is insufficient monitoring of learners' destinations.

## Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

27. Leadership and management are good. The principal, ably supported by a good senior management team, provides strong leadership with a clear vision for the college. Good strategic planning involves governors and staff at all levels. Staff are focused on continuous improvement. Governors are well informed and operate effectively. They play a key role in monitoring college performance. Their training has improved since the last inspection. The college has made good progress in managing the merger with Newark and Sherwood College and developing a single strategy for improvement. Since the last inspection, college success rates have risen, but only to national averages.
28. The self-assessment report is good. Quality assurance, led by an enthusiastic vice-principal, is good. External moderation by other colleges has been used effectively to raise standards and share good practice in lesson observations. Staff now have confidence in the reliability of data. Staff are set challenging improvement targets but are well supported in trying to achieve them.
29. Equality of opportunity is well promoted and monitored but is not always sufficiently emphasised in lessons or work-based learning reviews. The college complies with the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Learners with restricted mobility are now able to access all areas. Learners and staff share a mutual respect and feel valued and secure. Child protection arrangements are thorough with appropriate policies and procedures. Staff are well trained and fully aware of their responsibilities.
30. Extensive and productive partnerships enable the college to address national, regional and local priorities. The college has worked closely with training providers and the University of Lincoln to rationalise local provision and better meet the needs of learners.
31. Staff recruitment and selection is well managed. Staff feel highly valued and the college has extensive arrangements to promote staff wellbeing. Staff development is good. The annual staff development week has successfully focused staff on improving teaching and learning. Communications are good and staff feel fully informed.
32. Resources are good and accommodation is generally of a high standard. The learning resource centres are very well equipped. Most classrooms are bright and clean but some are stark and lack stimulating displays. The college is further developing its arrangements for monitoring room utilisation and occupancy.
33. Financial management is good. Significant surpluses are planned and achieved in order to invest in capital developments linked to strategic priorities. Success rates are improving. Overall, 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, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	1,147	63	60	3	2,063	59	59	0
	04/05	1,290	63	64	-1	2,018	51	62	-11
	05/06	1,508	65			1,075	51		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	7	71	65	6	4	75	52	23
	04/05	6	67	68	-1	*			
	05/06	*				*			
NVQs	03/04	223	57	61	-4	137	61	62	-1
	04/05	264	71	67	4	84	63	67	-4
	05/06	294	70			31	74		
Other	03/04	917	64	60	4	1,922	59	59	0
	04/05	1,020	61	64	-3	1,934	50	61	-11
	05/06	1,214	64			1,044	50		

\*course not offered

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	1,054	48	56	-8	2,823	54	54	0
	04/05	1,247	51	61	-10	2,119	52	60	-8
	05/06	1,507	63			1,866	61		
GCSEs	03/04	486	49	61	-12	515	63	59	4
	04/05	574	51	64	-13	544	61	62	-1
	05/06	621	62			318	59		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	46	61	63	-2	6	50	57	-7
	04/05	11	64	67	-3	4	25	70	-45
	05/06	21	38			10	80		
NVQs	03/04	222	47	52	-5	240	45	54	-9
	04/05	196	59	57	2	278	48	60	-12
	05/06	258	73			175	54		
Other	03/04	300	46	54	-8	2,062	53	53	0
	04/05	466	47	60	-13	1,293	49	59	-10
	05/06	607	60			1,363	62		

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, 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	03/04	1,591	61	64	-3	1,205	56	54	2
	04/05	1,852	66	67	-1	1,482	61	57	4
	05/06	2,054	68			1,233	58		
A/A2 Levels	03/04	373	83	84	-1	106	75	66	9
	04/05	297	87	86	1	92	76	69	7
	05/06	336	89			51	73		
AS Levels	03/04	753	56	63	-7	233	52	50	2
	04/05	911	60	65	-5	183	53	52	1
	05/06	999	64			151	62		
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	166	65	52	13	36	72	44	28
	04/05	140	73	60	13	15	80	53	27
	05/06	48	83			11	73		
NVQs	03/04	52	42	54	-12	298	46	47	-1
	04/05	41	51	62	-11	262	51	54	-3
	05/06	44	59			245	48		
Other	03/04	247	41	56	-15	532	57	56	1
	04/05	463	62	60	2	930	63	58	5
	05/06	627	62			775	60		

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003/04 to 2005/06

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	125	24	32	43	47
	Advanced	54	31	31	56	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	178	44	38	52	50
	Advanced	86	36	34	51	48
2005/06	Apprenticeship	188	52	53	56	58
	Advanced	98	26	44	36	54

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	151	10	16	16	24
	Advanced	47	19	19	30	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	161	21	22	27	29
	Advanced	93	24	21	32	31
2005/06	Apprenticeship	232	29	33	31	38
	Advanced	111	11	27	15	34

\* The number of learners who planned to complete their learning programme in the given year

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'