

INSPECTION REPORT

First College

25 March 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

First College is a not-for-profit organisation limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It provides work-based learning in land-based provision, construction, engineering, business administration, information technology, retail and customer services, hospitality, childcare, and foundation studies. There are 322 learners currently on work-based learning programmes for young people. There are fewer than 10 learners in total on land-based provision, construction and engineering, 14 learners are on childcare, 14 learners on IT and 29 learners on foundation programmes.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning is satisfactory in information technology, retail and customer services, hospitality, and childcare. Business administration and foundation programmes are unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, equality of opportunity is good and quality assurance is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

Business administration, management & professional	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Information & communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- effective management of change
- good internal communications and teamwork
- strong promotion of equal opportunities
- good access to flexible learning opportunities
- good relationships with employers and partners

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient strategies to improve retention and achievement
- weak implementation and monitoring of quality assurance arrangements
- poor management of guidance and support for learners
- poor planning of training
- inadequate individual learning plans

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 12 inspectors spent a total of 48 days at First College in March 2002. They examined 79 portfolios of evidence, 89 individual learning plans, assessment records, external verifiers' reports, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures. Inspectors interviewed 103 learners and 52 employers and workplace supervisors. They visited 60 employers. There were 89 meetings with staff and 18 off-the-job training sessions were observed and graded. They also studied the current self-assessment report and action plan, produced in August 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	2	0	3	1	0	0	6
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Health, social care & public services	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	5
Foundation programmes	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3
Total	0	3	3	9	1	1	1	18

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. First College was established in September 2000 as a result of the merger of two local training organisations. There has recently been a further merger with another training provider in Peterborough. The college works with a number of partners ranging from employers to local learning partnerships. First College is a not-for-profit organisation limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It operates from sites at Gainsborough, Grimsby, Louth, Peterborough and Skegness. There is administrative support at each site. A board of directors determines policy and strategy. First College employs 75 staff, of whom 55 are full time. There is a lead internal verifier, 12 other internal verifiers and 22 assessors.

3. First College currently has 322 learners, of whom 60 are out of funding. Most learners are employed. First College offers foundation modern apprenticeships, advanced modern apprenticeships, other work-based learning for young people, the Life Skills element of the Learning Gateway, and preparation for work programmes. The training is funded by two local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire, and Rutland. At present, there are subcontracted training arrangements for land-based, construction and engineering learners, but this provision is being reduced and the numbers of learners are very small. First College also franchises some learning programmes. In September 2001, the unemployment rate in Lincolnshire, East Lindsey and Peterborough was 2.4 per cent, 2.8 per cent and 2.3 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 2.9 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in Lincolnshire, East Lindsey and Peterborough was 54 per cent, 50 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Lincolnshire is 0.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. At First College, 1 per cent of the learners are from minority ethnic groups.

Work-based learning for young people

4. First College provides training in land-based provision, construction, engineering, business administration (including accounting and management programmes), information technology (IT), retail and customer service, hospitality, childcare and foundation programmes. The site at Peterborough offers programmes in business administration, IT and customer service. The majority of learners are enrolled on programmes in business administration, accounting and management, which has 144 learners; retail and customer service, which has 59 learners; and hospitality, which has 55 learners. There are fewer than 10 learners in total on land-based provision, construction and engineering, 14 learners are on childcare, 14 learners on IT and 29 learners on foundation programmes.

5. Retention and achievement rates are low on all programmes. Seasonal employment and a transient labour force partially explain the low achievement and retention rates in the hospitality programme area. In IT, many learners gain employment without successfully completing their programme. The college has acknowledged the low retention and achievement rates in the self-assessment report, but has achieved little at present to remedy matters.

6. Employers are insufficiently involved in the planning of training programmes. Employers are not adequately informed of the modern apprenticeship framework requirements, they are not directed to participate fully in the review process or in the assessment of learners. First College does not take adequate responsibility for the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. There is insufficient off-the-job training in business administration, management and childcare, where there is insufficient teaching of theory. Some assessment practices are weak, and internal verification is not of a consistent standard.

Life Skills

7. First College has a contract for Life Skills and Preparatory Training as part of the Learning Gateway. There is good retention and progression from Life Skills. 50 per cent of starters in 1999-2000 progressed into further training, as did 53 per cent of those who started in 2000-01. Attendance is very good. Learners' programmes are diverse and range from attending, to the achievement of recognised national awards.

8. All learners have the opportunity for work tasters and extended work placements. Some learners are placed in high-risk work environments where knowledge and understanding of health and safety are essential. However, many learners do not receive this training until after they have been on work experience for a while. Many learning sessions are delivered with no planned structure. There are few links between formal learning sessions and recreational sessions. Learners' skills in literacy, numeracy, IT and personal development are not fully developed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

9. A board of directors determines policy and strategy for First College. Four of the current directors are senior personnel from local authorities, six are from commercial organisations and one is employed by the college. The accountant, who is also the general manager and the head of learning and quality assurance, both attend board meetings. The managing director leads the college management team, which includes the heads of the eight schools. First College employs 75 staff, of whom 55 are full time. There is a lead internal verifier, 12 internal verifiers and 22 assessors. There are 12 cross-college working groups for various aspects of planning, development, quality assurance and equal opportunities. The college has policies and procedures for equal opportunities, anti-harassment, appeals and complaints. There are comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures. The college was accredited with the Investors in People standard in March 2001, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. It also holds an international quality assurance standard. The college produced its first self-assessment report in August 2001. An updated report and development plan was produced for inspection. Self-assessment has been carried out for the past four years in the three institutions which now constitute First College.

STRENGTHS

- effective management of change
- good strategic planning for off-the-job learning resources
- good internal communications and teamwork
- effective links with external partners
- good promotion of equal opportunities
- systematic use of the self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient strategies to improve retention and achievement
- insufficient implementation of key skills at some training sites
- some ineffective management of guidance and support for learners
- inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- poor implementation and monitoring of quality assurance arrangements
- poor use of data to aid management decisions

10. First College has undergone significant organisational change in the past two years as a result of two mergers, the most recent taking place at the time of the inspection.

Both mergers have been exceptionally well managed, a strength not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Learners and staff were involved in choosing the new name of the college. Staff, learners and external partners were consulted on the new structure, and information about the changes has been effectively communicated and shared. Staff were interviewed individually by the managing director to alleviate any concerns. Before the mergers were implemented staff visited other sites to help them to integrate as a single company. Management roles within training centres and teams have changed substantially. Particular care has been taken in the appointment of a training centre manager for the newly-acquired Peterborough site, which is being managed temporarily by a management action group, which includes original staff from Peterborough.

11. The board's good strategic planning has resulted in very good resources for off-the-job learning resources, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The college is a member of the local regeneration partnership, which gained funding for the purpose-built training centre at Skegness. The excellent facilities include a hospitality training suite with training kitchens, a demonstration theatre and a bistro. All sites have a conference suite and extensive computer facilities containing up-to-date equipment and industry-standard software. There are rest rooms for learners with facilities for making drinks. Rooms are bright and spacious with good audiovisual equipment. There are ample reference books and workpacks available. Learners value the facilities. They have a feeling of pride and ownership of the resources.

12. Communication between managers and staff is good, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. There is an effective open management style and staff are encouraged to make suggestions and share good practice individually or through team meetings. Staff are kept informed about all aspects of the organisation through a cycle of meetings and through regular, informal discussions with training co-ordinators and managers. Staff are enthusiastic and work well as a team. Most staff are members of the cross-college working groups, which effectively share good practice and develop new systems and procedures. Managers work well to establish clear priorities and well-defined strategic objectives, which are understood by all staff and key partners. Staff are involved in the formulation of the annual business plan and receive a personal copy of the plan when completed. There is a staff newsletter for internal distribution and a well-produced newsletter, which is distributed to a wider audience, as well as to learners and external partners. These publications are used to promote news of learners' successes, performance against targets, equal opportunities updates, staff development and any projects being developed by the college with its partners.

13. There are excellent links with local external partners, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Some partners provide funding for learners to attend additional training courses, such as health and safety and food hygiene. The college has a range of supportive employers which provide training sessions and interview practice for learners. Other partners provide training for staff on issues such as equal opportunities, diversity and sensory impairment. The college works well with a consortium of other training providers and has recently developed a standard contract

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for use with subcontractors. Where several training providers use the same subcontractor, the consortium uses one of its members to carry out monitoring visits, observation of training and auditing of records on behalf of all its members. This system is effective and saves duplication of work. The consortium has effectively implemented changes in assessment, timing of courses and progress review systems of its subcontractors.

14. There are no effective strategies for addressing poor retention and achievement, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Staff are set team targets which only reflect contract compliance. There is insufficient analysis of management data to identify trends or reasons for the poor retention and achievement rates. There are no central records of individual learner's progress. The management information system has until recently, not been able to produce good analysis of data. New software has recently been installed to produce such statistics and staff have been trained to use it. A project is currently being carried out to identify why there is slow completion of qualifications.

15. There is insufficient development of key skills at some of the training sites. In many areas, key skills were not introduced to learners until several months into the training programme. Many learners have left their training programmes without completing the frameworks, or have taken extra time to complete their qualification. Employers have a poor understanding of key skills and do not help learners collect good key skills evidence. There is insufficient cross-referencing of evidence in portfolios of evidence with the assessment of key skills. Staff are not sufficiently confident to teach key skills, but this is now being rectified through relevant training. The newly-acquired Peterborough site was a pilot training centre for key skills and has developed excellent practices which will now be shared with the other training centres.

16. There is inadequate management of the advice and guidance given to learners at various stages of their training. This has resulted in some employers' and learners' needs and expectations not being met by First College. For example, some learners have been placed on inappropriate computer training programmes, which do not match their job requirements. A learner on a work placement at a leisure centre has received no guidance about relevant modern apprenticeship programmes. Many learners on other work-based learning programmes are capable of achieving a modern apprenticeship. There is an insufficient number of work placements in accounting, administration and management. Individual learning needs and the support provided are not always adequately recorded on individual learning plans. The induction programme has recently been improved to allow more time for guidance and initial assessment to help learners make better-informed choices of their training programme and to help the training providers and employers provide appropriate support where necessary. Identification and support for learners with additional social or learning needs has already been improved and is now satisfactory.

17. There is inadequate co-ordination of most on- and off-the-job training, although it is particularly good at the Peterborough site. There are no procedures to ensure that

planned on-the-job training takes place. Although some employers provide training which covers the development of the NVQ competences, they are not required to provide a structured training programme or to link training with assessment. They do not always have a copy of the NVQ standards. There is no observation of on-the-job training. Although assessors visit employers' premises to carry out progress reviews, many employers are not involved in the review process apart from signing the form once the review has been carried out.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

18. There are policies, statements and guides on equal opportunities, discrimination, harassment, appeals and complaints. A copy of the equal opportunities policy is given to all staff and learners. Learners receive an equal opportunities induction and are required to complete a project to reinforce their awareness of equal opportunities issues. An equal opportunities officer leads the working group which introduces and develops equal opportunities practice throughout the college. Employers undertake an equal opportunities assessment and are asked for a copy of their equal opportunities policy before a learner starts a work placement.

19. There is good promotion of equal opportunities. The equal opportunities officer works effectively with the working group to raise staff, learners' and employers' awareness of good practice in equal opportunities. The working group work to a detailed action plan, which is updated twice a year. The group has made significant progress in achieving the targets set. A well-produced newsletter is published three times a year, which focuses on equal opportunities and encourages learners and employers to contribute their own experiences of good practice. A well-produced good practice guide has been produced, with some input from learners and employers. A clearly written anti-harassment guidance leaflet has also been produced and distributed to learners and employers. This has already resulted in some learners reporting issues to their tutor, or to one of the named staff. The issues raised have been dealt with effectively.

20. An employer forum has been set up, with meetings at different times and venues, to enable as many as possible to attend. A learners' forum has also been established, to encourage learners to have their say, and to show that their opinions are valued. This has already had an impact, with staff now wearing their name badges at all times while at work, and a staff photograph board is also being installed. Both forums are publicised in the newsletter.

21. There are a number of examples of where learners with disabilities have been provided with appropriate learning aids such as large print materials and appropriate hardware and software. A review of access to all sites is being carried out, to further meet the requirements of learners with disabilities.

22. Equal opportunities is on the agenda of every team meeting, and the equal opportunities officer attends such meetings regularly to support and provide advice. Team leaders receive minutes of the working group meetings, which they report to their staff meetings. There has been considerable staff development in equal opportunities, with 70 per cent of staff achieving accreditation at an introductory level. Two staff have already undertaken advanced training and the rest of the working group plan to do so. Internal staff development events have also taken place. For example, the equal opportunities officer ran a training day to introduce staff to a new equal opportunities video being used with learners. Other relevant training includes, diversity in employment led by a member of staff from the LSC, and visual and hearing impairment awareness days which have been arranged with the Royal National Institute for the Blind and Royal

National Institute for the Deaf.

23. The video on equal opportunities has been recently used with the newest learners and has proved to be very effective in encouraging them to think about how they behave towards others, as well as how they should expect to be treated.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

24. There is good staff involvement in the quality assurance arrangements. Most staff are members of working groups, which report to the management group and make recommendations for improvements. The working groups are scheduled to meet four times a year, but some meet more frequently, such as the internal verification and key skills working group. All staff are able to put forward amendments to quality assurance policies and procedures, either individually or as a team. Amendments are introduced approximately ten times throughout the year on the basis of this process. This has caused some difficulties in staff keeping up-to-date with changes.

25. Effective use has been made of the self-assessment process to inform action-planning and team targets. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process. The development plan is reviewed and updated regularly and staff are able to identify the progress that has been made and have a clear sense of their own short, medium and long-term targets.

26. Quality assurance arrangements are poorly implemented and monitored. There is insufficient consistency in implementation throughout the college, and although there are internal audit mechanisms in place, these have not always been effective in improving practice. For example, individual learning plans are not consistently used during the progress review processes. Insufficient progress has been made in developing effective procedures to provide effective support for learners to improve retention and achievement rates. There are insufficient effective procedures to improve learners' punctuality and attendance. There is inadequate guidance for staff on how to effectively implement procedures for learners' support.

27. There are inconsistent internal verification and assessment practices throughout the college. Recommendations have been made by the internal verification and key skills working group, but have not yet been approved by the management group. Currently, there is insufficient use of diverse sources of evidence for learners' achievements. Portfolios of evidence often include insufficient coverage of the range of evidence required and show inadequate understanding of the appropriate background knowledge.

28. More effective use can be made of feedback from employers and learners. At present, the feedback mechanisms in use are mainly based on questionnaires which are limited in scope and which have poor response rates. Over the past few months, an employers' forum and a learners' forum have been introduced. These are in their early stages, at present they do not have a clear method of operating effectively and are not representative. The learners' group has much potential, but at present most learners are not aware of its existence.

Good Practice

One learner lives in a rural area with no public transport. He has been provided with a taxi to attend for one day a week for foundation studies and for a day a week at the Lincolnshire Rural Activity Centre to do amenity horticulture, with a work placement in a garden centre 6 miles from his home.

Poor Practice

A system for observing taught sessions has recently been introduced. The observers have not received any training in carrying out the procedures. There is no mechanism in place to ensure consistency in the application of this procedure throughout the college. Staff are not fully aware of the importance of this process or its implications for improved practice.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	144	4

29. There are 144 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration, management and professional. There are 50 advanced modern apprentices who are all employed. There are 45 foundation modern apprentices of whom 32 are employed. Forty-nine learners are following other work-based learning programmes for young people and 32 of these are employed. These learners are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) in accounting at level 2, 3 or 4, business administration at levels 1, 2, 3, or 4 and management levels 3, 4 or 5. Learners are recruited through employers, Connexions and the Employment Service or by individual arrangement. Learners attend an initial interview, initial assessment and induction to their learning programme. These activities are carried out in the workplace or at the training centre. Learners also have an induction to their workplace. Weekly off-the-job training, NVQ portfolio-building and key skills development sessions are held at the training centre or in the workplace. Learners working towards qualifications in management do not receive off-the-job training.

The following tables do not include the learners based at the Peterborough site, as the statistics are not available.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	9		45		41		30		39						
Retained*	0		13		4		7		10	26						
Successfully completed	0		13		2		6		9	23						
Still in learning	7		14		7		1		0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	13		38		21											
Retained*	0		4		7	33											
Successfully completed	0		3		7	33											
Still in learning	10		17		0	0											

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	46		30		19		38		68							
Retained*	0		7		11		24	63	37	54							
Successfully completed	0		7		8		23	61	37	54							
Still in learning	36		4		2		1	3	0	0							

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- well-planned, effective off-the-job training in accounts
- good access to flexible on- and off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- very poor retention and achievement rates
- slow key skills progress for many learners
- poor target-setting
- some poor attendance and punctuality at off-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent involvement of employers

30. Most learners have work roles and responsibilities that offer good opportunities for the development and assessment of the skills and knowledge required by the NVQ frameworks. The teaching of accounting is particularly strong. There is very thorough planning of each element, and schemes of work are given to learners at the beginning of their training programme in order to help learners to prepare for the accounting programme's central assessments. Individual sessions are well planned and structured and offer an effective combination of teaching groups of learners, support for individual study and individual coaching. Accounting training is a growing area of provision at First College. It enjoys a good reputation with local employers and learners achieve well in the central assessments when compared with national achievement rates. This was recognised in the self-assessment report.

31. There is good on- and off-the-job training, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Access to well-resourced training centres is arranged to suit learners' work commitments. Tutors and assessors are occupationally competent and qualified. Many learners attend the training centres intensively at the beginning of their training programmes and achieve useful additional qualifications, particularly in IT. Many employed learners are released from their work duties to attend off-the-job training. In some cases, the training is well linked to their on-the-job training. Group training is also provided in the workplace. Learners who change their job and are unable to attend the off-the-job training during the day, are invited to use the training provider's premises during the evening.

32. There are poor achievement and retention rates, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Many modern apprentices do not complete all their qualifications and many leave early without completing their training programme. Achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices is very low at 39 per cent in 1999-2000 and 8 per cent in 2000-01. Achievement of the advanced modern apprenticeship is even lower at 7 per cent in 1999-2000 and 20 per cent in 2000-01. Retention rates for the foundation modern apprenticeship are consistently below 50 per cent. Although retention rates have improved on the advanced modern apprenticeship, with only 41 per cent of learners leaving the training programme early in 2000-01, achievement is slow. There are large numbers of learners on other work-based learning programmes, but retention and achievement rates are also declining. Fifty-five per cent of these learners left the training programme in 2000-01, without completing their individual learning plan.

33. Apart from the provision at Peterborough, the achievement of key skills is still very poor. Of the 22 learners who achieved NVQs at level 2 on the foundation modern apprenticeship in 2000-01, only four completed the full framework. Many learners are

on inappropriate NVQ training programmes instead of modern apprenticeships. There is weak promotion of key skills to learners. For many learners, key skills are not introduced until late in the training programme. At Peterborough, learners start key skills training and assessment at the beginning of their training programme. Evidence from the key skills is cross-referenced to the administration standards. All recently recruited learners at Peterborough are working towards key skills.

34. Target-setting is poor. Specific targets are rarely recorded and are frequently not met in the time allocated for completion. Many learners have a poor understanding of the importance of key skills. One foundation modern apprentice is still working towards learning goals agreed in 1999. The level of qualification towards which a learner works, is dependent on analysis of their job rather than their own potential. The emphasis on job analysis and working towards the skills required by the job often results in general learning agreements rather than being specific to the learner. Targets set are often unchallenging for the learners. Prior achievement is identified, but is rarely used to develop individual learning plans. Many learners are making slow progress. Much of the internal verification occurs at the end of the NVQ assessment process and fails to monitor learners' progress.

35. There is poor attendance at off-the-job training sessions and punctuality is poor, a weakness not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Some learners attend training sessions only occasionally. No measures have been taken to rectify this weakness.

36. There is a high level of employers' involvement in providing appropriate training to learners who are based at the Peterborough training centre, but this is not consistent at the other training centres. Many employers understand the content of the training programmes and the progress being made by their learners. Information is given to employers outlining the components of the training programme. Some employers are not sufficiently involved in planning training and assessment.

Good Practice

One learner, who left school at 14, is now a personal assistant to a director and will soon complete an advanced modern apprenticeship and hopes to gain more qualifications and a university place.

Poor Practice

One learner's portfolio was submitted for external verification and has been lost in the training centre. The evidence gathered by the learner is lost, although duplicate assessor and verifier records have been retained.

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	14	3

37. There are 14 learners on work-based learning programmes in information and communications technology (ICT). There are 10 foundation modern apprentices, three advanced modern apprentices and one learner on another work-based learning programme. Learners are recruited through employers, Connexions and the Employment Service, or by individual arrangement. Most learners are interviewed, assessed and put forward to employers by First College's staff. Some learners find their own employment and the employer uses First College as a training provider. Once an employer offers an applicant a job, the learner is allocated a relevant training programme. Off-the-job training is provided at three training centres in Louth, Peterborough and Skegness. All modern apprentices are employed. Learners can work towards a range of additional qualifications provided by the training provider and by employers. There are five staff who are qualified internal verifiers. Staff from First College provide on-the-job training and visit the learners in the workplace to carry out assessments and progress reviews.

The following tables do not include the learners based at the Peterborough site, as the statistics are not available.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	1		1		1		4		2						
Retained*	0		0		0		2	50	0							
Successfully completed	0		0		0		2	50	0							
Still in learning	1		0		0		0	0	0							

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2				4											
Retained*	0				1	25										
Successfully completed	0				0	0										
Still in learning	2				0	0										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		2		2		20		68							
Retained*	0		1		1	50	12	60	42	62						
Successfully completed	0		1		1	50	12	60	42	62						
Still in learning	1		1		0	0	0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good work placements
- effective off-the-job training
- thorough induction programme
- particularly good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- low achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- few training plans in the workplace
- some work-based supervisors lack knowledge of NVQ systems

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- earlier introduction of evidence gathering and portfolio-building at Peterborough
- further develop staff knowledge of practice in industry and commerce

38. Work placements are good. Most employers, particularly in the Peterborough area, are multinational companies with up-to-date computing equipment and systems. Learners are provided with a wide range of IT support and equipment for training. Some employers give learners tasks which use a range of skills in IT, enabling them to meet the requirements of the NVQ. These employers comment on the long-term value for their companies of developing the IT skills of the learners.

39. There is effective off-the-job training. There are good IT training manuals and other relevant learning materials. The training rooms are good and trainers give clear presentations, answer questions effectively and use a variety of teaching methods. Most of the training is based on resource-based materials, and learners are provided with good individual help and support. Handouts are clear. Training is well monitored. Learners are encouraged to enrol on additional courses. Off-the-job training also includes portfolio-building, which most learners are able to carry out effectively.

40. Learners have a thorough induction programme. Learners fully understand health and safety issues, rights and responsibilities, anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies and know who to contact in the event of such problems arising. Induction also covers the content of their training programmes and what is required of their work placements. In addition, some learners also receive relevant induction from their employers.

41. There is particularly good support for learners. Trainers and assessors visit learners in the workplace at least every 12 weeks or more frequently if necessary to carry out observations and other assessment activities and update individual learning plans. Staff have a good working relationship with learners and the workplace supervisors, and often secure additional training for the learners. Some learners obtain additional qualifications by attending extra courses. The collecting of evidence and portfolio-building is not carried out sufficiently early in the NVQ training programme at the Peterborough training centre.

42. Insufficient planned training occurs in the workplace. Most of the training involves watching and working with a workplace supervisor or an experienced member of staff, rather than organising formal, planned training. Most employers do not have a formal training plan. There is insufficient planning of learners work in the various departments of the companies at which they are employed. There are insufficient effective training assignments in the workplace. There are no written guidance notes for training in the workplace. Workplace assessments show the level of competence achieved by learners, but this information is not used effectively to build on and plan further training and

assessment. There are no qualified work-based assessors. Employers' information packs, which outline the employer's role in the training process, have been introduced in some areas. Some workplace supervisors have not read this information pack. Some employers have a poor understanding of NVQs and are unable to advise learners about evidence requirements. In most cases, workplace supervisors have followed a different course of training to the current training programmes and do not fully understand how to collect evidence. There is insufficient collection of evidence and assessment in the workplace. Workplace supervisors are not always present at progress reviews. They are not involved in setting targets on individual learning plans. They do, however, sign the progress review documents.

43. Achievement rates are poor for the modern apprenticeship framework. Over the past three years, 13 advanced modern apprentices have enrolled on training programmes and 10 have left early without completing their framework. In the same period, of the 26 foundation modern apprentices who started training programmes, four have completed their framework, 10 are still in training and the rest have left without completing the framework.

44. Trainers and assessors are appropriately qualified and have good working relationships with learners. Tutors' knowledge of current practice in industry and commerce is satisfactory but there are insufficient measures to help them keep up-to-date with technology and industry developments.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	59	3

45. There are 59 learners on work-based learning programmes in retailing, customer service and transportation. There are 10 foundation modern apprentices, 16 advanced modern apprentices and 33 learners on other work-based learning programmes. Most learners are enrolled on customer service training programmes. The Peterborough training centre provides only customer service work-based learning programmes. All modern apprentices are employed, as are all learners working towards NVQs in customer service and half of the learners working towards NVQs in retailing. Learners are employed in companies which include the local district council, a leisure centre, a care home, a holiday village, a garden centre and First College itself. Learners are able to work towards additional NVQs. Learners are visited each month, except for those based at Peterborough, who are visited every three months. Assessment is carried out throughout the training programme. Progress reviews take place quarterly to meet contractual requirements. Many learners have telephone access to assessors. There are five fully qualified staff, two are based at Peterborough, two at Skegness and one works primarily at the training centre in Louth. Three of the team are qualified internal verifiers, and two are working towards a key skills award. One of the team has a basic skills award and works closely with the foundation training team to support retail level 1 NVQ learners who have additional learning needs. The assessor based at Peterborough also works with learners on business administration programmes. Regular off-the-job training is provided at the training centres. Some workplaces have in-house training programmes. All learners have access to IT equipment at the training centres. Learners based in Skegness also have access to an in-house shop and a bistro, which are suitable for training purposes.

The following tables do not include the learners based at the Peterborough site, as the statistics are not available.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people														
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	5		33		10		10		20				
Retained*	0		6		4		4		6	30				
Successfully completed	0		1		4		4		4	20				
Still in learning	4		10		1		2		0	0				

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people														
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	7		19		13								
Retained*	0		4		2	15								
Successfully completed	0		0		2	15								
Still in learning	4		3		0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people														
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	35		45		9		23		17				
Retained*	0		21		4	44	18	78	11	65				
Successfully completed	0		21		4	44	18	78	11	65				
Still in learning	28		4		0	0	0	0	0	0				

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- effective use of evidence
- effective short-term target-setting
- good support for learners by employers

WEAKNESSES

- low achievement rates for modern apprenticeships
- poor understanding of training programmes by employers
- inadequate use of individual learning plans

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of learning resources for retail and customer service
- wider range of qualification options

46. There is effective use of evidence throughout the training programme. Portfolios of evidence are well organised and clearly referenced. Good evidence is collected from a diverse range of sources, including learners' everyday work, work products, witness testimony, personal reports, case studies, background knowledge, oral questioning and assignments. There is good continuous assessment of learners' progress by assessors throughout the training programme. The evidence is validated by both the learner and the assessor. Some employers also confirm the evidence submitted. All learners complete the matrix after a training session with their assessor. There is effective cross-referencing of evidence for both NVQ and key skills. The Peterborough training centre was involved in the piloting of external key skills tests. There is good implementation of key skills at Peterborough, and key skills are often achieved before NVQ completion. The other training centres are now carrying out key skills training and assessment early in the training programme and then moving on to NVQ training. This is proving effective in retaining learners and enabling them to complete the framework in good time.

47. There is effective short-term target-setting. After each assessment visit, an action plan is agreed, which provides clear details of the evidence to collect for specific units or elements of the NVQ. The assessor sets short-term targets for completion by the next planned visit. The employer is not systematically included in this process. Learners have a good understanding of their progress. They are able to identify gaps in their evidence

and collect additional evidence as necessary.

48. There is good support for learners by employers. Resources are good and include computers to produce written reports, e-mail and Internet facilities, and photocopiers and fax machines. Some learners have been able to change job roles to gain additional work experience and collect further evidence. Assessors are able to visit learners at any time in the workplace. Employers also encourage learners to work towards additional relevant qualifications.

49. Achievement rates are low for both foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. In 2000-01, only 9 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices achieved the full framework, with 14 per cent still in training. For that same year, only 5 per cent of advanced modern apprentices completed the full framework, with 30 per cent still in training. Retention rates on both modern apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory.

50. Employers have a poor understanding of the training programmes. Many employers do not know the modern apprenticeship framework requirements, and do not know how learners are assessed. Although most employers provide effective support for learners, they do not fully understand the process of collecting evidence and carrying out assessment.

51. There is inadequate use of individual learning plans. There is insufficient detail on how the individual learner will achieve the framework. There are no medium or long-term targets for the completion of individual units of the NVQ framework. On-the-job training provided by employers is not used to help complete the individual learning plans. There is poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. There is insufficient use of learners' previous achievements. There is poor recording of learners' progress. In some cases, learners' career aims are not considered when developing their individual learning programmes.

52. Learners on customer service and retailing training programmes are provided with learning resources, developed by First College staff, which cover aspects of background knowledge. These materials do not cover the full range of background knowledge requirements of the training programmes and do not relate to the new occupational standards in customer service. The range of training programmes, though satisfactory, is insufficient for the needs of learners and employers. There are currently no training programmes for the specialist NVQ for employees of call centres, despite the large numbers of call centres in the Peterborough area. There is no training programme in warehousing, and at the Peterborough training centre, there is no retail training available.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	55	3

53. There are 55 learners on work-based learning programmes in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel. There are 12 advanced modern apprentices, one foundation modern apprentice and 42 learners on other work-based learning programmes. The training centre in Skegness recruits new learners throughout the year. Most learners are employed when they start their training programme. Training takes place on the job and at the training centre where there are two training kitchens, a demonstration theatre and a small Bistro which is open to learners and staff. Learners on food preparation and cooking training programmes attend the college on a day-release basis to gain background knowledge and practical techniques to prepare themselves for the busy summer season within the workplace. The head of school responsible for this occupational area carries out verification of portfolios. Five staff are trainers and assessors and work with learners in their work placements and at the training centre. Staff have relevant industry experience and most have or are working towards assessor and internal verifier qualifications.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	5		25												
Retained*	0		3													
Successfully completed	0		3													
Still in learning	4		8													

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		5													
Retained*	0		2													
Successfully completed	0		1													
Still in learning	1		0													

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	113		58													
Retained*	0		36													
Successfully completed	0		34													
Still in learning	41		1													

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- effective off-the-job training
- good promotion of the catering training programme
- good monitoring of learners' progress

WEAKNESSES

- inappropriate assessment practices
- poor individual learning plans
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more encouragement of employers to undertake observational assessment
- more assessment of practical competence earlier in the training programme

54. Off-the-job training is effective. The recently built training kitchens and demonstration theatre at the training centre are well equipped and conform to current legislation on health and safety and food hygiene requirements. Food production training is planned well and includes advanced craft techniques, as well as patisserie and confectionery qualifications and food hygiene certification at a higher level than the programme requirements.

55. There is good promotion of the catering training programme through taster days, a Saturday club and summer vacation sessions for school pupils who show an initial interest in the hospitality industry. Celebrity chefs have also attended award events for learners. All learners can enter various industry competitions and carry out exhibition work. Some learners have achieved external awards. There is good use of publicity to highlight learners' achievements.

56. There is good monitoring of learners' progress. Learners are visited at least once a month. The monitoring of learners is closely linked to individual action-planning and target-setting. There is effective support for learners, particularly for those with additional learning needs. Staff provide effective additional pastoral support, as well as individual help for specific NVQ requirements that are not easily covered in the workplace.

57. There are some inappropriate assessment practices. There is insufficient use of evidence in learners' portfolios. Evidence is poor and provides inadequate proof of learners' progress. Assessment planning is not structured and there is insufficient co-ordination of the assessment process. There is insufficient assessment carried out across a number of units. Achievement is not cross-referenced. Observations of learners are not recorded consistently. Some of the paperwork does not effectively cover the unit requirements or allow for the cross-referencing of evidence.

58. Individual learning plans are poor. Data collected on learners at recruitment, induction and initial assessment are not used to set realistic targets. There is insufficient accreditation of prior learning. Individual learning plans are not used effectively to identify the needs of individual learners or to monitor progress. A newly devised individual learning plan does not list the units to be achieved, or the anticipated start and achievement dates. Learning requirements are not detailed or cross-referenced to the NVQ units. Retention and achievement rates are poor, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report, the inspection identified reasons for this.

59. There is poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Employers are not effectively involved in developing the individual learning plans or reviewing learners' progress. There are excellent links with employers, but these are not used to develop structured training or planning of assessment. Employers who are qualified as assessors, or are working towards appropriate qualifications, are not encouraged to take part in the assessment process.

60. Some learners have experience in the industry when they enrol on a training programme but have no observational assessment until they have completed a 26-week food production training course at the First College training centre in Skegness. Learners are not assessed at an earlier stage of the training programme, particularly in performing repetitive or routine tasks. This slows down learners achievement of units leaving a lot of the work for learners to complete until the end of their NVQ.

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	14	3

61. There are 14 learners on work-based learning programmes in health, social care and public services. There are two foundation modern apprentices, six advanced modern apprentices and six on other work-based learning programmes. Off-the-job training is carried out at the training centres at Louth or Skegness. Assessment is carried out by assessors who visit the learners in the workplace approximately once a month. There are no work-based assessors. Prior to starting on the programme, learners attend an initial information day, which includes a brief introduction to NVQ and key skills, an equal opportunities awareness session and initial assessment of basic and key skills.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	7		2													
Retained*	0		1														
Successfully completed	0		0														
Still in learning	6		0														

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	2		2													
Retained*	0		2														
Successfully completed	0		2														
Still in learning	2		0														

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people															
NVQ Training															
	2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	6		6												
Retained*	0		5												
Successfully completed	0		5												
Still in learning	6		0												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good assessment of practical work
- effective links between staff and employers
- good opportunities for additional training

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient assessment of background knowledge
- slow progress towards key skills
- ineffective individual learning plans

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more taught sessions in off-the-job training
- more information on programme requirements for employers
- more encouragement of employers to undertake assessors' training

62. There is good assessment of learners' practical work. Assessors meet with learners every two weeks to plan their assessment. Learners understand what evidence they need to collect and what their assessor will observe in the workplace. There is good use of observation of learners carrying out specific tasks. Learners have a thorough understanding of the NVQ requirements, and of how to reference the evidence in their portfolios. They write detailed accounts of their own work, effectively using the

occupational standards as a guide.

63. There are good links between assessors and employers. Assessors ensure that they see the workplace supervisor during each visit. They inform them about what the learner is working on and what support is required. Workplace supervisors are also able to discuss any relevant issues with the assessor. Employers provide learners with appropriate work experience to meet their training requirements and collect evidence. The college responds promptly to any telephone requests and enquiries from employers.

64. Learners are able to work towards a good range of additional qualifications. Assessors encourage learners to attend courses run by a local development partnership for early years childcare. Assessors ensure that employers are aware of which courses would be appropriate for their learners, and encourage them to allow their learners to attend. Courses attended by learners are recorded by assessors during progress reviews.

65. There is insufficient assessment of background knowledge. Portfolios of evidence contain insufficient evidence of background knowledge for some units, including an awareness of what constitutes a healthy diet, different religious and cultural requirements when providing meals, and a sound knowledge of child development theory. Learners are not aware of the need to cross-reference their written accounts to the knowledge evidence. Learners provide good evidence of their competence through detailed accounts of their own work and activity plans but do not show sufficient background knowledge and understanding in these accounts.

66. Learners have made slow progress towards achieving the key skills requirements of the framework. For many current learners, key skills were introduced at a late stage of their training programme. There have been some improvements to key skills training and assessment, but these have not been in place long enough to have made an impact on achievement rates. Key skills projects are being introduced, but are too late into the training programme for current learners. Although learners now have access to basic skills training, there is insufficient integration of key skills training and assessment into the training programme.

67. Individual learning plans are ineffective. There are no clear targets for progression and achievement. Individual learning plans are not kept up to date. Some new forms are not being used consistently. For example, details of additional learning support needs have not been recorded. Learners do not fully understand the importance of individual learning plans in monitoring progress or recording individual learning and support needs.

68. Off-the-job training sessions usually consist of portfolio-building and individual learner's support. Learners can attend off-the-job training during the day or in the evening. Some learners only spend half a day every two weeks carrying out their off-the-job training. Some learners spend as little as two hours every two weeks, carrying out off-the-job training, because of work commitments. Recently, more off-the-job training consists of taught sessions on background knowledge but some learners have not had

the benefit of this due to poor attendance. There are books and relevant materials available, but there are no learning materials to help those who find it difficult to attend the off-the-job training.

69. Employers support learners well in the workplace, but their support would be more effective if they had more information about the NVQ scheme of work, so that they could plan to ensure that learners get the appropriate experiences at the right time. It would also benefit the learners if employers were encouraged to train some of their staff as assessors. Even if they did not carry out the assessment, they would be better able to support the learners with their on-the-job training.

Foundation programmes

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	29	4

70. There are 29 learners on Life Skills training programmes. Life Skills runs for 26 weeks, but can be extended. Learners attend for a minimum of 16 hours a week over three days. Many learners have additional learning and social needs. All learners can carry out work tasters and extended work experience. Preparatory training is also provided, which is aimed at young people who are undecided about their vocational area. This is a short programme lasting eight weeks to get learners into employment with training. Life Skills and preparatory training run at the Louth and Skegness training centres. The foundation team of staff are also responsible for supporting learners who have identified additional learning and social needs, from across the other areas of learning. There is one co-ordinator, two basic skills tutors and a foundation training tutor. All four staff have relevant qualifications.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Life Skills	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	50		36		10											
Retained*	0		28		8												
Successfully completed	20		28		8												
Still in learning	29		0		0												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good resources
- good additional support for learners from staff
- high retention and progression rates
- some good personal achievements

WEAKNESSES

- some poorly planned training
- inadequate basic skills training
- inadequate health and safety training
- poor use of individual learning plans

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer targets on individual development plans

71. Resources are good. The training rooms are modern and well-laid out. There is a television and video player in each room and a wide range of learning resources, including learning packs and self-study materials. Good handouts are produced by some of the tutors. Learning activities include the use of music keyboards, the care of a 'virtual' baby and relaxation classes. There is a wide range of activities outside the training centre such as ten pin bowling, football, swimming and gym sessions. These activities are not always linked to the individual learner's targets. IT resources are inadequate and insufficient use is made of audiovisual aids during training sessions.

72. There is good support for learners from staff. This support is often provided out of the main hours of the course. Staff help to secure additional funding from external agencies to support individual learners. This has included the purchase of clothes for interviews. The training provider maintains informal support and an open door policy for those progressing from both Life Skills and preparatory training.

73. There is good retention and progression from the Life Skills training programme. Only 20 per cent and 22 per cent of learners left the training programme early in 1999-2000 and 2000-01, respectively. Many of these learners achieved some individual goals. Of those learners who enrolled on the training programmes in 1999-2000 and 2000-01, 50 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively, progressed into further education.

FIRST COLLEGE

Many of these moved into NVQ training courses at First College. Attendance is also very good, with only 4 per cent of unauthorised absence days in total over the last six months.

74. Learners' individual targets range from attending the training programme, to the achievement of recognised national awards. There are some good personal achievements and these are recognised with certificates. This motivates learners and helps improve punctuality, attendance, attitude to others and reinforcement of acceptable behaviour. Achievements are also celebrated regularly with award ceremonies and learners also appear in the training provider's newsletter.

75. Some training is poorly planned. Insufficient use is made of good resources. Some learners do not find the training sufficiently challenging. Some training relies on paper-based written exercises. All learners complete a learning styles checklist as part of their initial assessment. Most learners were identified as visual learners but the resources in some sessions were not used to meet these individual learning styles. Learning points were not reinforced and there was inadequate monitoring of learners' progress.

76. There is inadequate basic skills training. Some of the basic skills training sessions are recreational, and are an important part of the overall learning experience. There is insufficient recording of learners' basic skills during these activities. The learners are not sufficiently challenged by the basic skills programme and are unable to progress through the activities provided.

77. There is inadequate health and safety training. The induction programme includes health and safety awareness training and learners complete a short project in identifying health and safety issues in a real work environment. This project does not monitor learners' understanding of their responsibility for health and safety in the workplace. Learners receive no feedback or training to rectify gaps in their knowledge about health and safety issues. Many learners do not receive this training until after they have been on work experience. The risk assessment, health and safety training and ongoing reinforcement is not sufficient for learners on work placements in high-risk work environments.

78. There is poor use of individual learning plans. Individual learning plans are not fully completed and short-term targets are not clearly recorded. Previous achievements and interests are not always taken into account when recording targets. It is not always clear how and why individual targets have been altered or added to. Learners of Life Skills training programmes have an individual development plan produced by personal advisers. These are set out in paragraphs and it is not always easy to identify individual targets.

Poor Practice

Although the initial assessment for basic skills is a timed test, learners were allowed to take as long as they needed to complete the test.