

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **First College Reinspection**

**12 September 2003**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## FIRST COLLEGE REINSPECTION

### 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. 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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning 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
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

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## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. First College was established in September 2000 as a result of the merger of two local training organisations. There was a further merger with another training provider in Peterborough immediately before the previous inspection in March 2002. The First 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, Horncastle, Louth, Peterborough and Skegness. There is administrative support at each site. The board of trustees determines policy. The number of staff in the organisation has fallen from 75 at the time of the previous inspection to 67. Thirty-one of the staff work part time. There are 36 trainers and assessors, of whom 11 are internal verifiers.

2. First College has 335 learners, most of them employed. It 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 Lincolnshire Jobcentre Plus and two local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Lincolnshire & Rutland and Cambridgeshire.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### **Business administration, management & professional**

3. There are 137 learners on business administration, management and professional, work-based learning programmes. Four have additional learning needs. There are 19 advanced modern apprentices, 95 foundation modern apprentices and 23 learners following other work-based learning programmes for young people. These learners are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) in accounting at level 2, 3 or 4, business administration at level 1, 2, 3, or 4 or management at level 3, 4 or 5. Learners are recruited through their employers, Connexions or Jobcentre Plus, or by individual arrangement. They 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 sessions include NVQ portfolio-building and key skills development, and are held at the training centre or in the workplace. Learners working towards qualifications in management do not receive off-the-job training.

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### Foundation programmes

4. There are 95 clients on foundation programmes. Fourteen Jobcentre Plus clients are following basic employability training (BET) at one centre. BET programmes usually last for 26 weeks although this may be extended. They include a jobsearch element for half a day a week. First College also provides programme centres for 41 clients at three sites. Clients attend for between two and 13 weeks, and carry out jobsearch activities. Most of these clients have been unemployed for more than six months before being referred.

5. A further 40 learners are following Life Skills programmes. Learners join programmes for a 19-week period which is sometimes extended. They receive an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy needs from Connexions and are then referred to First College, where they receive a further assessment and induction. The training programme comprises a range of modules. It includes the development of personal skills, mainly through practical activities, and covers information and communications technology (ICT), literacy, numeracy and language, budgeting, and independent living. Learners also work towards qualifications in basic food hygiene and emergency first aid and may attend a work-experience placement.

6. Programme centre and BET programmes were not included in the previous inspection.

### ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	9
Number of learner interviews	45
Number of staff interviews	12
Number of employer interviews	15
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	5
Number of visits	13

### OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. The ALL inspection in March 2002 found that the training in business administration, management & professional, and on foundation programmes was unsatisfactory. In information and communications technology, retailing, customer service and transportation, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and health, social care and public services the training was satisfactory. First College's leadership and management were also satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were judged to be satisfactory or better.

## GRADES

*grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

	Inspection	Reinspection
<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Inspection	Reinspection
<b>Foundation programmes</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Programme centres		4
Life Skills	4	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults		3

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	137	3

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

#### Strengths

- good development of learners' vocational skills
- good assessment practice
- good pastoral support

#### Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices
- ineffective use of initial assessment

### Achievement and standards

8. Achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices have improved and are now satisfactory. They rose from 31 per cent in 2000-01 to 42 per cent in 2001-02. A further 26 per cent of learners who started programmes in 2001-02 are still in learning. Achievement rates for NVQ learners have improved from 44 per cent in 2000-01 to 60 per cent in 2001-02, with a further 15 per cent of the 2001-02 intake still in learning.

9. Achievement rates are still poor for foundation modern apprentices. Just over a third of foundation modern apprentices who started in 2000-01 successfully completed their modern apprenticeship frameworks. Of those who started in 2001-02, 28 per cent have successfully completed so far, and 33 per cent are still in learning. Foundation modern apprentices comprise nearly two-thirds of all learners in this area of learning. Retention rates have improved since the previous inspection. Seventy-nine per cent of advanced modern apprentices, 81 per cent of foundation modern apprentices and 71 per cent of NVQ learners who started programmes in 2002/03 are still in learning.

10. First College has introduced a new database system to record learners' progress. Targets are agreed for learners' achievement, retention and progression rates. There are regular management meetings at which progress towards these targets is reviewed. Key skills training is now integrated more closely with vocational learning programmes. Learners now start work on key skills earlier, and have a better understanding of their relevance to their NVQs. Some learners who had previously made slow progress are now making satisfactory progress, but almost a quarter of foundation modern apprentices have exceeded their expected completion date.



## Quality of education and training

11. There is good development of learners' vocational skills. First College works closely with employers to ensure that training programmes meet their needs. The few learners who are not employed are found suitable work placements. Some workplace supervisors allocate tasks each week linked to individual learners' current off-the-job training programmes. First College provides additional support to accounting learners who do not work in accountancy practices. They are able to develop their skills in simulated working conditions guided by experienced tutors. Learners have access to First College's facilities outside normal working hours. Many learners achieve additional qualifications. These include basic ICT qualifications and a wide range of learndirect courses. Most work-placement providers recognise learners' good skills development by offering them permanent employment before they complete their qualifications.

12. Assessment practice is good. Review and assessment visits take place every four to six weeks and formal progress review interviews take place every twelve weeks. Learners' progress towards their learning goals and qualifications is recorded and targets are agreed. The learners have a clear understanding of what they have to cover and the evidence they need to produce. Assessment methods include observation in the workplace, workplace documents and witness testimony. Learners collect good portfolio evidence including word-processed documents, spreadsheets, and records of the use of a wide variety of mail distribution systems.

13. First College gives learners good pastoral support. Few of the present administration and accounting learners have significant additional support needs, but support is provided sensitively and effectively when needed. The organisation's caring attitude and willingness to act promptly when problems arise is part of a strategy to improve retention and achievement rates. It has improved attendance and punctuality at off-the-job learning sessions by introducing attendance registers and regularly reviewing the attendance data collected. First College pays for some learners to travel by taxi because of a lack of public transport. It has taken immediate action whenever serious issues have arisen in the workplace by providing a more suitable work placement.

14. The quality of training is satisfactory. Two training sessions were observed. The learners were interested and well motivated. The sessions were planned with clear objectives and used a range of teaching methods. All learners have an individual learning plan, which is regularly updated.

15. Learning resources are satisfactory. The training rooms are well equipped with up-to-date, modern, industry-standard equipment. Learners have access to a learndirect centre equipped with good-quality computer hardware and software. There are learning resources available for learners to take away and use independently. First College's staff are experienced and qualified in accounting and administration.

16. All learners are given an initial assessment which covers their learning styles, key

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skills, and literacy numeracy and language. The results are recorded on an individual learning plan. The assessment identifies learners with significant additional learning needs. There are four learners with identified additional learning support needs. Specific learning resources are being provided to meet these needs. One learner receives individual numeracy support during the off-the-job training session, and is given work to take away and complete before the next session. Progress is reviewed against a specific literacy, numeracy and language learning plan. However the initial assessment is not effective for those with less-obvious needs. Learners do not understand the results of the assessment tests nor how this information is used to plan their training. For example, there has been no adaptation of the programme for learners who feel uncomfortable working in groups. All the learners are expected to learn in groups during off-the-job training sessions.

### **Leadership and management**

17. The leadership and management of business administration, management and professional programmes is satisfactory. The programmes meet the needs and interests of the learners, with most learners attending regular off-the-job training sessions. A new quality assurance system has been introduced but it is too early to judge its effectiveness. Internal verification is satisfactory. There are effective systems which meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. There are regular meetings of internal verifiers and assessors to deal with problems and ensure standardisation. External verifiers' reports are acted on promptly and good practice is shared. There are satisfactory communication systems enabling staff teams at different centres to meet and discuss programme development. Staff are encouraged to attend a range of meetings, including internal verification meetings, and workloads are manageable. Performance reviews take place annually although there have been some delays this year while new staff were introduced to the system. Interim reviews have taken place, which includes direct observation of work activities. Staff have attended a range of professional development courses, including literacy, numeracy and language assessment, key skills, and equal opportunities. Work towards providing training support materials for the new technical certificates is being shared between teams. There will be programme reviews following the piloting of new resources.

**Foundation programmes****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Programme centres	41	4
Life Skills	40	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	14	3

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

**Strengths**

- good achievement of qualifications on BET and Life Skills programmes
- good individual support to meet clients' and learners' needs
- very good work placements on BET and Life Skills programmes

**Weaknesses**

- insufficient access to training for programme centre clients

**Achievement and standards**

18. Job outcome rates for clients on BET programmes are satisfactory. Learners on Life Skills programmes make satisfactory progress into work-based learning and further education. These clients and learners achieve a range of additional qualifications in subjects such as health and safety, basic food hygiene, manual handling and lift truck operation. In 2002-03, 45 per cent of BET clients and 59 per cent of Life Skills learners achieved additional qualifications. Clients and learners gain good practical literacy, numeracy and language skills in their workplace, and their progress towards skills and personal development is satisfactory.

19. Job outcomes rates are poor for programme centre clients. In 2001-02 and in 2002-03, 27 per cent of clients gained jobs. In 2003-04, 30 per cent of those who have left the programme so far have gained a job.

**Quality of education and training**

20. Clients and learners receive good pastoral and learning support from enthusiastic and encouraging staff. This includes help with benefits and housing problems, and financial support. They are referred to specialist agencies where appropriate. The effective personal coaching improves their confidence and motivation.

21. Work-experience placements for Life Skills learners and BET clients are good. All clients attending the BET learning programme are in work placements, as are 94 per cent of the Life Skills learners. The wide range of placements includes care work, small animal

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care, administration and accounts and gardening. Employers are very supportive. Some provide work tasters as well as helping clients and learners to develop social and life skills, improving their confidence and motivation. There is good communication between staff at First College and the employers, ensuring that effective action is taken to deal with any problems.

22. Of the two teaching sessions observed one was good, the other satisfactory. There has been much development work on the teaching of literacy, numeracy and language. This was a weakness at the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Initial assessment comprises an assessment of literacy, numeracy and language skills, a learning styles questionnaire and an interview. These are used effectively to plan learning in BET and Life Skills, but have failed to identify some training needs for programme centre clients.

23. There is insufficient access to training for programme centre clients. First College provides three part-time programme centres through its contracts with Jobcentre Plus. Some are only open for half a day or a day a week and do not meet the needs of clients with more significant jobsearch needs. Training is focused on the needs of clients at a specific time, such as help with a particular application, and not on the development of jobsearch skills. There is a range of jobsearch modules available but no standard procedure for how they should be taught. There is a comprehensive range of resources available on all programmes, including textbooks, videos and learning games. However, there is no formal guidance available to staff on what resources they should use for each of the modules. All clients complete the curriculum vitae module satisfactorily and many take advantage of the comprehensive jobsearch resource packs available.

24. Clients and learners have a satisfactory understanding of key induction topics including health and safety, which was a weakness in the previous inspection.

## Leadership and management

25. The planning of training and the use of individual learning plans was a weakness in the previous inspection. A new, comprehensive individual learning plan has been introduced. Staff have been trained in its use, including the setting and measuring of targets. There is now satisfactory planning of BET and Life Skills training, but there is insufficient co-ordination of the individuals' learning programmes.

26. Clients and learners attending more than one programme option, such as literacy, numeracy or language, information technology, or a work placement, have specific targets set for each option. However, there is no formal process to measure whether they are applying what they have learnt, or practising their new skills at their work placement. Progress reviews are often too general, and based on the clients' or learners' self-assessment of their progress. One staff member is usually responsible for the overall progress review but they have insufficient access to information from tutors in the different programme options to judge whether the client is making the progress expected. There is no single learning plan or record which is kept up to date with learners' progress in all areas.