

REINSPECTION REPORT

First College Reinspection

25 January 2007



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. First College was established as a not-for-profit training organisation in 2000. First College works with a number of partners ranging from employers, local learning partnerships and local colleges. It operates from sites at Gainsborough, Louth, Peterborough and Skegness. All centres provide information and communications technology learning through learndirect.

2. East Lindsey is the rural and coastal district of Lincolnshire. It is characterised by small and dispersed market towns and seaside resorts with very low populations and a significant lack of public transport. East Lindsey's mixed economy includes tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and service industries. Ninety-five per cent of local companies employ fewer than 25 people. Employment growth in the Peterborough area is concentrated in the service sector, while agricultural and manufacturing employment is in decline. The unemployment rate for November 2006 was 2.1 per cent for Lincolnshire and 2.9 per cent for Peterborough, compared with the national average of 2.5 per cent. According to the 2001 census, 1.3 per cent of the population of Lincolnshire is from a minority ethnic group, compared with a national average of 9.1 per cent.

3. First College is managed by a board whose members are representatives of the various partnership organisations. Board members determine policy and are unpaid. The management structure is made of a chief executive, a head of learning/quality assurance manager and a finance manager. In addition, First College employs a total of 56 staff, of whom 30 are full time and 26 are part time. The quality manager, who is also the lead internal verifier, supports six internal verifiers and 33 assessors/advisers. Two members of staff are employed to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills.

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Health, public services and care			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Early years		4	
Apprenticeships for young people	32	4	
NVQ training for young people	25	4	

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Retail and commercial enterprise 1		
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Hospitality and catering		1
Apprenticeships for young people	21	1
NVQ training for young people	45	1

Preparation for life and work 2		
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Employability training		2
New Deal for young people	23	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	21	2

Business administration and law 2		
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Accounting and finance		2
Apprenticeships for young people	9	2
NVQ training for young people	36	2
Administration		2
Apprenticeships for young people	54	2
NVQ training for young people	14	2
Customer service		3
Apprenticeships for young people	16	3
NVQ training for young people	2	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

Health, public services and care 2		
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Early years		2
Apprenticeships for young people	17	2

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

4. The ALI inspection in November 2005 found that First College's provision in health, public services and care was inadequate. In all other areas of learning the training was good or better. First College's arrangements for leadership and management were judged to be good and its arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process the health, public services and care provision was judged to be good. First College's overall effectiveness is now also good.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	6
Number of learners interviewed	12
Number of staff interviewed	15
Number of employers interviewed	6
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of visits	3

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Early years		2
Apprenticeships for young people	17	2

5. Seventeen learners are on early years programmes. Of these, 13 are level 3 advanced apprentices and four are level 2 apprentices. Eighty-eight per cent of the learners are women and there are no learners from minority ethnic groups. Twenty-nine per cent of all learners have additional learning needs. All learners are employed in early years settings or schools. They are recruited onto the programmes from employers, Connexions or Jobcentre Plus. Fortnightly off-the-job training sessions are held at the training centres in Louth and Skegness or in the workplace. First College's assessors visit the learners in the workplace each month and carry out formal reviews involving employers every 12 weeks.

Early years

Strengths

- good success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- good literacy and numeracy support
- good progression between programmes
- particularly good individual support

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed teaching observations

Achievement and standards

6. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are good. For advanced apprentices, the success rate in 2003-04 was zero per cent. This has improved to 100 per cent for 2005-06. For apprenticeship programmes, the overall success rate improved from zero per cent in 2003-04 to 67 per cent in 2005-06. These rates are well above the national averages of 35 per cent and 55 per cent respectively. Learners develop good skills and knowledge in early years. They develop confidence in their skills and are well motivated. Portfolios are well organised. Learners are able actively to describe the knowledge they have gained and the new skills they are acquiring.

The quality of provision

7. Literacy and numeracy support for learners is good. Early screening is carried out by suitably qualified staff for all learners. Further diagnostic testing is carried out for those learners who require it. Learners follow a suitable tailored programme which is vocationally relevant. They have the opportunity to take practice tests before taking their key skills tests for numeracy and literacy. Testing is done online so learners have instant feedback on their results. Workbooks are used effectively to support learners with their

literacy and numeracy needs. Even where learners have passed the tests, gaps in learning are identified and these are effectively supported by staff with the use of workbooks and examples.

8. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In some sessions the teaching is challenging and inspiring and engages learners well. Tutors have good coaching skills. In individual sessions, tutors provide clear explanations and engage the learners in productive and guided discussion. For most learners there is a well-differentiated approach to individual needs. Good use is made of vocational examples throughout and learners are encouraged to relate to their own practice. However, some learners receive insufficient formal teaching. For example, one level 3 learner has had no formal teaching since commencing the programme in April 2006.

9. Sufficient resources support learning. Training rooms at both centres are purpose-built. The rooms are attractive and learners' work is well displayed. Learners have good access to books and internet facilities. Many learners have access to other resources in their early years settings.

10. Learners' assessment is satisfactory. Learners are provided with helpful feedback on their work. Assessment for the technical certificate is carried out in a timely way and learners are able to have their work checked by assessors before handing it in for final assessment.

11. Progression routes from level 1 to level 3 qualifications are clear and well used. Seventeen per cent of level 1 learners have progressed to level 2 programmes. Seventy-two per cent of the current level 3 learners progressed from level 2. Learners spoken to by inspectors were keen to progress. However, one learner who completed level 2 did not receive an induction to level 3 before commencing the programme.

12. The curriculum is satisfactorily meeting the needs of learners and employers. For example, staff are developing suitable schemes of work to ensure that learners have a good understanding of older children.

13. Employers speak highly of the contact they have with First College's assessors who are effective in including them in the training of learners. However, some employers are not sufficiently informed regarding First College as an organisation. First College does not have an employers' forum and the newsletter is general and not specific to the needs of early years employers.

14. Guidance and support for learners is good. Assessors frequently visit learners in the workplace and can be contacted by telephone or text message at any time. Learners meet with their assessor at the learning centres every two weeks for further support and guidance. At the request of learners and with agreement from employers, increased study time at the centre is being offered. In addition, assessors visit their learners each month in their workplace. Regular and effective reviews involving employers are carried out every 12 weeks. Clear action plans result.

Leadership and management

15. Early years programmes are satisfactorily managed. Effective team working and good communication support a small staff team. Some staff are newly in post and are working

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with a moderate number of learners. Newly appointed staff have the opportunity to work closely with other more experienced staff. Regular bimonthly staff meetings are held with detailed minutes and action plans. Staff contribute well to the company-wide quality systems.

16. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities and are confident about making complaints should they need to do so. For example, learners requested more contact time with their assessor during off-the-job training days and this has increased to a full day. Reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity is usefully explored in review sessions by assessors with contemporary examples.

17. Satisfactory internal verification systems are in place. A new internal verifier has recently been appointed. There is an effective sampling system in place which includes all learners. Issues are clearly identified with assessors and follow-up action is monitored at assessors' reviews. Portfolios are effectively internally verified and feedback is given to learners and staff. Standardisation meetings are held regularly and actions are recorded. Recommendations from external verifiers' reports are carefully monitored in staff meetings.

18. The self-assessment process is effective and inclusive. The report identifies all the strengths found by inspectors but inspectors did not agree with weakness identified in the report.

19. The system to observe teaching is insufficiently developed. The system is new and no staff teaching observations have yet been carried out. The staff member responsible for this is not trained in conducting observations and has not yet completed appropriate teaching qualifications. Although some informal opportunities are in place to teach in teams, they are not systematically applied. Good teaching practice is not identified and routinely shared within the staff team. Feedback is not routinely sought on the quality of teaching sessions from the learners. Some observations have been carried out on reviews with learners and action-planning sessions, but recorded feedback does not match the grades given.

