

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: North Lindsey College

Date of visit: 12 March 2009

Context

North Lindsey College is a general further education college established in 1953 as a technical college, with a main campus in Scunthorpe. Outreach centres are located in Barton and Ashby and a further five within local manufacturing industries. The college's previous inspection was in 2007. Inspectors judged the college's overall effectiveness as good, as were leadership and management, teaching and learning and guidance and support. They judged the provision for learners aged 14 to 16 as outstanding. Achievements and standards were satisfactory.

The college provides further and higher education to **1,827 full-time learners**, of whom 1,545 are aged 16 to 18 and 282 are aged 19+. In addition, there are 399 work-based learners, 1,320 part-time learners, 1,778 Train to Gain learners in Yorkshire and Humberside and 1,403 Train to Gain learners in other regions on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes. Eight hundred and forty four learners are on higher education programmes.

Achievement and standards

What actions are having a positive impact on success rates for all learners, in particular for those learners on under-performing programmes?	Reasonable Progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in improving success rates for all learners. The headline success rates at the college have continued to improve over the last three years. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on long courses improved by 4% last year to 75%, this is 6% above the 2006/07 average. The rate for short courses for this age group improved by 3% to 85%, this is just above the 2006/07 average. Long course rates for adults improved by 8% to 66% and are in line with the national average. Short course rates for adults improved by 6% to 86% and are now in line with the national average.

The college has maintained a rigorous approach to improving retention of learners on programmes. Systematic tracking of both attendance and retention takes place resulting in detailed monitoring at team meetings and tracking and support for individual students whose attendance falls below the college target. Three retention officers support learners at risk and provide referral to college support services. So far, the retention officers have supported 430 full-time learners. Managers have

placed particular focus on improving the retention rates in health and social care. Retention rates in this area are currently much improved.

Managers effectively monitor and evaluate the attendance and retention on courses that negatively influence overall success rates. This strategy has been effective and at the time of the visit the overall retention rate is more than 10% higher than the previous year. In addition, a wide range of successful initiatives such as international links, activities and reward systems provide good stimulus and motivation to learners.

Quality of provision

How is the system for observation of teaching and learning impacting on the quality of teaching received by learners?	Reasonable Progress
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The college is making reasonable progress in this area. New arrangements to monitor teaching and learning developed since the previous inspection are now routine features of quality improvement. Mentoring arrangements for teachers needing support and new staff are well-established. New staff are now asked to teach a short lesson to help identify their personal development needs at an early stage. Teachers and learners now use information and learning technology (ILT) and the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) routinely to provide lessons that are more interesting and to support personal study. The college is aware that the use of the VLE is more effective on vocational programmes.

The college profile of good or outstanding teaching and learning improved in 2007/08 by 4% to 78%. Over the same period, retention and success rates have improved as has the attendance rate in lessons. However, the college is aware that more evaluative work is needed to better gauge the impact of teaching and learning on the progress learners make.

How is the impact of additional learning support monitored?	Reasonable Progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in monitoring the impact of additional learning support. Observation of all support roles now takes place as part of the quality improvement process. Regular and frequent learner and staff questionnaires are completed and analysed. Staff and managers complete detailed analysis of data to measure the success, retention and achievement rates of learners in receipt of additional support. Regular additional support audits also take place. The incorporation of this section into a new School for Life and Development Skills also provides direct management structures.

The college has remedied the previously identified lack of dedicated dyslexia support and a trained member of staff is now in post. Further plans are in place to develop this support area further. Staff carry out the initial assessment of key skills earlier, often pre-enrolment, which includes a detailed analysis of literacy and numeracy performance levels. This allows the college to plan effectively and prepare proactively to meet learners' support needs. Learners have an individual additional support plan that is negotiated and agreed with them. Curriculum link tutors monitor learners' progress against the plans.

How successful have 14 to 16 developments been?	Significant Progress
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The college has continued to make significant progress in developing provision for learners aged 14 to 16. It recently received an Association of Colleges Beacon Award for college and school partnership working. The high quality skills centre, a dedicated 14 to 16 area with specialist vocational workshops, IT and classroom areas provide excellent equipment and resources.

Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 continue to improve and are very high at 90%. There are also upward trends in retention and pass rates. The retention rate at 96% is very high. School pupils attending the skills centre make very good progress. For example, learners predicted to achieve a GCSE grade E achieving merit grades on college provision. The provision includes a range of qualifications at level 1 that provide good progression routes to further education (FE). Progression is good at 50% and the current retention rate for these learners is excellent at 98%.

The college is leading and supporting the delivery of a range of vocational diplomas to be delivered from September 2009. It has also successfully piloted a pre-16 programme for learners not participating in education and has plans to increase this provision in the future. A young apprenticeship programme in engineering is on course for a September 2009 start.

The college has been involved in a very successful international project with equivalent establishments in Southern California. This has motivated learners taking part and results in some high quality collaborative work with American students. The competition winners will travel on future exchange visits.

The college completes a detailed service level agreement with participating schools that clearly states the roles, responsibilities and expectations of both partners. This is effective in over-coming differences between school and college disciplinary systems.

What system does the college have in place to respond efficiently and effectively to employers requirements?	Significant Progress
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The college has made significant progress in establishing systems to respond to employers. At its Kingsway Business Centre, Kingsway Consulting Ltd, the college has developed a robust tracking system to analyse the impact of employer engagement processes. This utilises a common document to record all activity with employers. A specific section highlights and evaluates the impact and converts this to a monetary value for the employer including the value of each learner involved. Learner and employers' feedback is analysed and evaluated regularly to improve the engagement process. The college receives an extremely high approval rating from the employers it works with.

Other examples of good employer responsiveness include successful tenders to provide funded outplacement and redundancy support, and to deliver funded 'skills for jobs' to target the hard to reach unemployed. A good partnership also exists with the University of Hull to develop relevant higher education units.

The college has an increasing local, regional and national profile resulting in Train to Gain contracts with four LSC regions. A dedicated office in the West Midlands services some of these contracts. The college has developed bespoke provision for 80% of the training developed to meet employer needs.

Both college and centre staff are effectively involved in a range of networking activities, such as the Kingsway Business Learning Community. The college is developing an international reputation following the presentation of a paper at the World College Congress in New York and has successfully submitted a number of additional papers to forthcoming international events.

Leadership and management

How is the self-assessment process used to drive improvements across the whole college?	Significant Progress
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The college has made significant progress in this area. It has addressed all of the issues raised at the previous monitoring visit relating to the self-assessment process. All aspects of the colleges' work are now scrutinised including work-based learning, Train to Gain programmes, cross-college support, and financial areas. The college has developed further its external links with other colleges to validate its self-assessment report. It has also invested in the establishment of a new senior management post of director for strategy and information. Data and information are now more easily available to all staff at an appropriate level of complexity and is used with confidence to gauge performance and support improvements. Failing sector subject areas have benefited well from self-assessment and development

planning to identify and share good practice. This has improved teaching and learning, course file management and learner success rates.

How successful is the college in responding to feedback from key stakeholders?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress on this issue. The last monitoring visit recognised the significant work completed to review and develop a range of methods that accurately record the views of learners. Further progress has been made and the college now has a set of generally successful arrangements to capture learner, employer, parent and staff feedback. The college newsletter is effective in informing parents and employers of a range of college, employment and learner issues and achievements. Staff increasingly use feedback to inform the development of new provision, including for learners aged 14 to 16 and young apprenticeships. The college recognises that feedback from employers and parents is low and is investigating ways to use its website to improve this.