

# First Rung Ltd

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 51850

Name of lead inspector: Richard Beaumont HMI

Last day of inspection: 8 January 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 4 Pegamoid Road  
Edmonton  
London  
N18 2NG

Telephone number: 020 8803 4764

## Information about the provider

1. First Rung Ltd (FR) is a registered charity, established in 1983. Most of FR's provision is Entry to Employment (E2E) training, although it delivers a range of other employability courses to adults and young people. FR also delivers childcare Train to Gain provision for two other training providers. FR is based in north London and operates from two centres in Edmonton and Colindale. Learners are recruited from a geographical area that includes the London boroughs of Enfield, Barnet, Brent, Haringey, Harrow and Waltham Forest. FR contracts with the London North Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The scope of this inspection included the E2E provision from which FR derives approximately 70% of its total income.
2. In 2008/09, 255 E2E learners were recruited. Just over half of these are from minority ethnic groups. The approximate London ethnic minority average is 30%. North London is very diverse in culture and income. GCSE A\* to C achievement rates in the London boroughs in which FR recruits range from 73.8% in Barnet to 58.4% in Enfield. Unemployment rates for London are 9.2% compared to an England average of 8%.
3. FR has a board of 11 trustees. The chief executive is responsible for the strategic management and direction of FR and is supported by a senior management team of five managers. The company currently employs 26 full-time and 10 part-time staff.
4. FR was previously inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in November 2005.
5. FR provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Southgate College
  - Keep It Simple

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: Entry to Employment	255 learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2
Subject areas	Grade
Preparation for life and work	2

## Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of FR's provision is good. Learners make good progress into employment or full-time education. Many learners gain additional accredited qualifications, but not many do so in literacy and numeracy. The development of learners' employability, personal and social skills is very good. Many learners have low attainment on joining FR, but they make good progress. Attendance is satisfactory.
7. The management of challenging behaviour is good. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are lively and motivate learners well. The information gathered at the start of the programme on individual learners is thorough. However, this information is used insufficiently in lesson planning to meet individual learners' needs. That said, learners' needs are well met overall. Partnership arrangements are effective in supporting learners to achieve. Care, advice and guidance are good.
8. Leadership and management are good. Management of performance is particularly effective. Staff and learners are well supported and feel valued. Quality improvement arrangements are thorough and comprehensive. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. FR monitors equality and diversity well and there are minimal

variations in the performance of minority groups. The self-assessment process and value for money are good.

## Main findings

- Progression rates into employment and full-time education have steadily improved, and are now good. Few learners gain accredited qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Attendance is satisfactory. Learners feel particularly safe at FR.
- The development of employability, personal and social skills is very good. Many learners enrol at FR with poor prior attainment and low self-esteem. By the end of the programme they have a much clearer focus as to what they can achieve and much improved self-belief.
- The management of learners' challenging behaviour is particularly effective. Staff at FR use negotiation, reason and respect well to support learner progress.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and productive and many use a range of teaching methods to motivate learners. Much information is gathered at enrolment on a range of learner abilities and behaviour. However, this is not used sufficiently to plan lessons to meet all learners' individual needs.
- FR meets the work placement needs of learners particularly well. Learners' work placement requests are carefully considered and, where practical, are met. Induction is thorough and learners have a good understanding of what is required of them and of FR. Partnership arrangements effectively support learners to progress.
- Care, advice and guidance are particularly effective. Pastoral support is very good. Learners benefit from regular progress reviews. However, recording and recognition of learners' performance and progress are insufficient.
- FR is well led and the management of performance is particularly effective. The monitoring of the organisation's, and of individual staff members', performance is good. Staff and learners feel valued and well supported. Team work is effectively developed.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. All staff have recorded appropriate criminal checks and they understand the process of supporting learners. Training arrangements for trustees and staff are satisfactory. Links with outside agencies are effective.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Induction and lesson planning effectively support learning. The monitoring of data and analysis of trends are good. Anti-bullying measures and celebration of diversity are well developed. The ethnic staff profile matches that of the learners which is much higher than the local community. FR works well to widen participation of under-represented groups.

- Quality improvement arrangements are thorough. The self-assessment process is inclusive and closely matches the findings of the inspection. Value for money is good.

### What does First Rung Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Attendance of learners needs to be more closely monitored and data actively used to improve this aspect of learner performance. Arrangements for learners to 'catch up' on missed learning sessions need to be more systematic.
- Data gathered at initial assessment and enrolment need to be actively and effectively used in planning lessons to meet individual learner needs. Different tasks need to be introduced in lessons to address the different learner abilities within a class.
- Recording and recognition of learners' starting points and subsequent progress needs to be clearer. By the end of the course, learners should be able to clearly assess and celebrate what progress they have made in any personal objectives set. FR should introduce ways in which more learners can be accredited with literacy and numeracy qualifications.
- The arrangements for monitoring, recording and training in relation to learner safeguarding should be developed further in order to make them more effective.
- FR should analyse the findings from internal teaching and learning observations to collectively improve teaching and learning and share best practice more effectively.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- having an opportunity to prove themselves
- the chance to get into college or a job
- being given respect
- gaining more confidence
- staff that are really supportive
- the safe environment
- being able to start at any time.

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- the computer equipment at the Edmonton centre
- the choice of food at lunch time
- the length of the day (currently too long).

## Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

### What employers like:

- the very supportive and effective staff
- the good preparation of learners for work placement
- the close monitoring of learners' welfare and progress
- the effective communication with FR staff.

### What employers would like to see improved:

- nothing identified.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

9. FR has a clear vision for improving and developing the company. Communication across the organisation is effective and staff have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives. Monitoring of performance and quality improvement arrangements are particularly effective. Staff and learners feel valued and they contribute well towards securing sustained improvements. However, the use of data to monitor learner progress across all aspects of provision is not fully developed.
10. FR has made steady improvement since the previous inspection. Key strengths have been maintained and all key challenges effectively addressed. Progression rates into employment or further training and equality and diversity are now judged to be good. Many learners achieve additional qualifications, although not many in literacy and numeracy. Management and staff have a clear understanding of the quality of training offered. The self-assessment report closely matches inspection key findings.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

11. Progression of learners into employment and full-time education has steadily improved and is now good. In 2008/09, 67% of learners progressed into positive outcomes. Of these, 50% progressed into a full-time education programme. There is little variation of progression rates between ethnic minority groups and males and females. Overall, learners make good progress. Many learners achieve additional qualifications, although the number of learners gaining literacy and numeracy qualifications is low. For those not gaining a qualification, how well learners progress is unclear. Attendance is satisfactory.
12. Learners develop very good employment, personal and social skills whilst at FR. Most learners enrolling have few qualifications, poor social and work skills, and many have low self-esteem. Learners enjoy the programme and feel particularly safe whilst training. This helps learners flourish and gain confidence in their own abilities and future. They have realistic career aspirations and are positive about the progress they make. Employers report that learners are well prepared for work, and that they develop sound competence quickly. Many learners are offered employment when there is a suitable vacancy.

### The quality of provision

Grade 2

13. FR staff manage learners' challenging behaviour well, particularly in learning sessions. Rules of behaviour are clear and implemented effectively. Staff continuously and appropriately challenge poor behaviour. Learners respond well and quickly adapt to their changing environment. Overall, teaching and learning

are satisfactory. In most sessions, learning is developed through a good range of varied teaching methods. Sessions are lively and maintain learners' interest and motivation. Teachers use praise to good effect. Teachers are generally well qualified with appropriate teaching experience. However, in all lessons, there is insufficient planning of learning to meet all learners' individual needs. Initial assessment is thorough, although individual learner profiles are not used effectively to plan for different activities in lessons, for example for more or less able learners. The provision for supporting the development of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory.

14. Provision meets the needs of learners and the broader community well. In most cases, learners' requests for particular work placement experience are met. Induction is particularly thorough and promotes a raised awareness of responsible behaviour, team working and independent learning. Learners' rights, responsibilities and the demands of training are thoroughly explained. Partnership arrangements are good and effectively support learners to develop their skills.
15. Care, advice and guidance are particularly effective. Learners receive very good pastoral support. Staff make good use of the local voluntary and statutory organisations available to support learners. Tutors meet regularly with learners to review their progress. However, there is insufficient recognition and recording of learners' performance and the progress that has been made, some of which could be accredited and certificated. The monitoring and target setting to improve attendance performance lack rigour.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

16. FR has well-established strategies to develop the organisation, with a strong focus on developing provision further. The senior management team provides good leadership, and the management of the organisation's performance is particularly effective. Senior managers maintain good communication with staff, for example through a series of planned individual and team meetings. Individual staff performance is regularly reviewed and clear improvement targets are set. Staff feel valued and well supported. Their contributions are actively sought. Roles and responsibilities are clear and staff development opportunities are good. The support offered by the board of trustees is satisfactory.
17. Quality improvement arrangements are thorough. The quality cycle is comprehensive and effective. The use of headline data and information is effective. However, a few aspects of data collection are not sufficiently developed to inform managers fully of learner progress. The internal observation of teaching and learning is used well to support individual teachers in improving their teaching practice. However, there is no overview of the quality of teaching and learning at FR. The sharing of best practice is satisfactory.



18. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Child protection policies are clear and appropriately related to current legislation. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are completed on all provider staff, including volunteers, and this information is held on a central list. A senior manager is designated as child protection officer and staff are fully aware of safeguarding reporting arrangements. Governors, managers and staff have, or are in the process of completing, appropriate safeguarding training. Support arrangements for learners disclosing are good. FR has effective links with a range of agencies to support learners. Learners on work placements are regularly visited by provider welfare staff. Learners feel particularly safe when attending FR training.
19. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Detailed policies and procedures underpin clear understanding by staff. Procedures to reinforce learners' awareness of equality and diversity are good. Induction is planned well and learners have sufficient recall of key aspects such as their rights and responsibilities. The curriculum is well planned to include a range of lessons that develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Learners enjoy these sessions. Anti-bullying and the recognition and celebration of diversity feature well around the centres. Learners enjoy the mutual respect from their peers and staff. Procedures for dealing with complaints are clear, although there have been very few. However, questions asked at progress reviews are insufficiently challenging and do not adequately test learners' knowledge of current law and company policies and procedures.
20. FR monitors equality data closely. Equality and diversity action plans and targets are clear and regularly reviewed. There is little difference in the progression rates between minority ethnic groups and gender groups. FR has successfully developed a range of employability training opportunities for the local community. It recruits a much higher proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups when compared to local community data. The staff and learner ethnic profile are closely matched and FR recognises the need to recruit further trustees who are more representative of the community. Appropriate equality training ensures that staff are prepared well to develop learners' understanding.
21. Feedback from stakeholders is used well to improve provision. The learner voice is strong and learners confirm that FR responds promptly to concerns raised. Communication with partners and employers is good. The self-assessment process is inclusive. The key findings from inspection closely match those in the self-assessment report. The quality improvement plan closely links to the self-assessment report and targets for improvement are clear, although not always appropriately measurable. The management of resources effectively supports learner achievement and value for money is good.

## Information about the inspection

22. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's deputy chief executive and quality manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local LSC, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
23. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather information. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## First Rung Ltd

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	73		73		
Part-time learners					
Overall effectiveness	2		2		
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2		2		
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	-				
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	-				
Quality of provision	2		2		
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2		2		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	3				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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