

Inspection of Lincoln College

Inspection dates: 23 to 26 January 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Lincoln College is a large general further education college with two main sites. Lincoln campus is the larger of the two. There are a broad range of courses available. Students can access leisure facilities including a gym and immersive puzzle escape rooms. Newark campus has a smaller range of provision; the largest curriculum areas are in construction, aerospace, hairdressing and adult learning.

Leaders partner with local employers to offer young people the chance to study in commercial work environments. For example, animal care students attend part of their studies at Rand Farm, a large working farm site. Catering students spend part of their studies at The Old Bakery, a restaurant in the city centre.

Currently, there are 2,932 students on education programmes for young people. They study a range of vocational courses, T levels and A levels. Leaders offer courses in most subject areas at levels 1 to 3.

There are 1,107 apprentices who study standards-based apprenticeships from level 2 to 5. Around half are 16 to 18 years old. Most apprentices study courses in construction or engineering. The remaining apprentices study mainly business or hairdressing apprenticeships.

Around 2,100 adults study courses from entry level to level 4. Courses broadly fall into one of the following areas: English; mathematics; English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); access to higher education; personal and professional development, distance learning and vocational courses. Adults study across all sites, in community venues and online. Leaders offer a small number of Skills Bootcamps in light vehicle service and leadership.

There are 92 students with high needs who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Nineteen students study employability qualifications with the supported education department. The remaining students undertake programmes of study in a range of subjects.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Leaders and staff create a welcoming and inclusive college environment. Most students, apprentices and students with high needs benefit from their studies. They learn from skilled teachers and access high-quality learning settings. For example, young people, who study catering, develop a broad set of skills as they learn in a variety of industry-standard kitchens and restaurants. Adults, who study digital marketing online, learn how to effectively promote their businesses using social media.

Most students on education programmes for young people, listen to new ideas, take pride in their work, and want to succeed. For example, A level sociology students consider each other's points of view carefully and participate in constructive debates. Level 1 bricklaying students, quickly improve their attitudes and behaviour when they participate in their practical classes. In the main, young students attend their courses well. However, on a few courses, such as level 3 art and design and level 3 uniformed protective services, students' attendance is too variable. Leaders recognise that students' attendance at English and mathematics classes is not always high enough.

Apprentices demonstrate positive attitudes to their studies and work. They perform well in their jobs and are valued by their employers. For example, level 3 maintenance operations engineer technician apprentices, who work in hi-tech industries, work under pressure to keep production machinery working efficiently. Staff take account of what apprentices already know, and can do, and adjust their courses appropriately. Apprentices attend their training at college well.

Adults are committed to their studies and most routinely attend their courses. They value highly the impact that their courses have on their career prospects and personal lives. For example, ESOL students improve their language skills which helps them operate more independently in society. Access to health and care students develop a high standard of knowledge and skills, which prepares them very well for destinations such as university.

Students with high needs benefit from well-planned and tailored courses which they attend very highly. Specialist support is effectively coordinated and responds to students' individual needs. Students who study supported internships flourish on their courses. Their experience of work and lessons at college enable them to develop their skills for independent living and work successfully. A few students with high needs, on vocational courses, do not always complete work experience as quickly as they are capable of.

Through initiatives such as 'Project You', students and apprentices can access a range of facilities and guidance about their mental and physical well-being. They have access to valuable lunchtime sports clubs, gym passes, therapy dogs and counselling services. Students and apprentices who access these services value the support they receive.

Staff successfully promote healthy relationships among students. Young students learn about signs of coercion, setting boundaries and consent. Initiatives, such as the, 'It's not OK' campaign continue to help to develop students' awareness. In a small minority of cases, some adults find tutorial sessions are not always relatable or appropriate for them.

Students, apprentices and students with high needs feel safe at college and work. They say they feel safe due to the consistent use of lanyards, swipe access and the presence of duty and security staff on college sites. Students and apprentices are confident they could raise any concerns they have for themselves or a friend.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have long-standing and highly purposeful relationships with a wide range of employers and stakeholders. They play pivotal roles on local and regional civic boards that focus on skills and regeneration. For example, leaders work in very close partnership with Newark and Sherwood District Council and the Town Fund Board. The partnership is deeply committed to addressing low educational aspirations in the area. In response, leaders continue to enhance the curriculum offer at the Newark site to meet local needs. They secure significant investment to develop resources at the campus, including, a new construction centre and an aerospace institute.

Leaders demonstrate a detailed understanding of local and regional skills needs. They use this knowledge very effectively to identify priority skills areas and to inform strategic and curriculum planning. Curriculum managers engage frequently and purposefully with stakeholders about what students' and apprentices' courses should include. Some of their longstanding relationships include the Royal Air Force, Lincolnshire Police, and leading aviation institutes. As a result of the partnership with the police, protective services students' courses include an emphasis on leadership, ethics and behaviour.

Leaders and curriculum managers successfully involve a wide range of stakeholders in students' and apprentices' studies. For example, plumbing students enjoy visits from large regional water companies who train them on water regulations. Many students and apprentices benefit greatly from guest speakers, employer-led projects and work in commercial environments that enhance their studies.

Senior leaders work very collaboratively with other education providers. The principal chairs the Lincolnshire Federation of Colleges. This group focuses on how colleges can work together collaboratively for the greater good of the region. Leaders also have an effective collaborative relationship with the University of Lincoln.

Leaders, and the college, are very highly thought of by their stakeholders who find them to be proactive, passionate and supportive of their skills priorities.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors focus closely on improving the quality of education. Since the last inspection, there have been substantial improvements to apprentices' courses. At the start of this academic year, leaders, working with curriculum managers, rightly identified several curriculum areas that needed to improve. In the main, reasons for underperformance were accurately identified, new quality systems introduced and detailed action plans put into place. In most cases, leaders' plans bring about swift improvement to students' and apprentices' experiences.

Working with stakeholders and employers, leaders and managers frequently review course content. They ensure that students' courses focus suitably on preparing them for their next steps. For example, access to higher education courses in health and care include a greater focus on biology and mathematics. This better meets the requirements and rigours of university entry. Supported internships, for students with high needs, contain the topics needed to effectively prepare them for independent work and living.

In most cases teachers organise topics well, so that students can build their skills and knowledge over time. For example, level 2 plumbing students learn the scientific principles behind hot- and cold-water systems, before studying their practical aspects. This supports them to gain an in-depth understanding of how they work. Carpentry and joinery apprentices begin by focusing on cutting and measuring, which they frequently revisit at work and build on as their training progresses.

However, in a few subjects, teachers' planning is less effective. For example, some policing teachers do not give enough thought to the links between different topics. This potentially hinders students from making connections between related information. In a few cases, ESOL teachers try to introduce too much new grammatical material at once, which confuses students.

Teachers are appropriately qualified and have suitable experience in their sectors. Most use their expertise well to enhance their teaching. For example, T-level education and childcare teachers use their extensive experience to help students make connections between topics on behaviour, mental health and SEND. Professional cookery teachers have expert knowledge of industry standards, they use this to provide incisive guidance and feedback to students.

Teachers usually provide clear instruction and use suitable activities to help students to understand topics. For example, A-level sociology teachers provide clear explanations of concepts and carefully explain key terminology. They make links to relevant theory and other A-level subjects such as psychology and science. Skills Bootcamp coaches use scenarios, role-play and group discussions expertly to provoke discussion and idea sharing. However, in a few cases, teachers occasionally provide explanations that are superficial and do not help students understand the complexities of the subject.

Most teachers check students' understanding through effective questioning, practical tasks and group exercises. In many cases, they adapt their teaching in response to these assessments. On occasion, they do not do enough to check students' answers to either written or spoken questions. As a result, in a few instances, they are less clear about what students have and have not understood.

Teachers typically plan plentiful practice activities to help students apply their new skills and knowledge. For example, animal management students have opportunities to practise the same skills with a wide range of animals. Teachers, working with employers, ensure that most apprentices can apply what they learn at work. For example, level 2 carpentry apprentices learn basic jointing techniques on workbenches before applying them to door and window fabrication at work.

Leaders and managers have established suitable processes to support students with SEND. Students' and apprentices' needs are explored in detail, and this results in suitable individual support plans that are shared with relevant staff.

Most students on education programmes for young people achieve well. However, historically there has been variability between courses. This has often been the result of students leaving their courses early. Students do not yet make enough progress in GCSE English and mathematics. Managers have taken suitable actions to improve these areas, but it is too early to judge the impact.

Teachers prepare apprentices suitably for their final assessments. In subjects such as, carpentry and joinery, business administration and customer services, apprentices achieve well and gain distinction grades. Leaders recognise that there is further work to do to improve apprentices' outcomes on a few courses. Most adults and students with high needs achieve well.

Students and apprentices have access to a beneficial careers programme. Staff plan a range of activities including trips to university and careers talks from industry experts. As a result, most students and apprentices understand their future options. In very few cases, apprentices would benefit from more specialist advice about their long-term career choices.

Leaders implement a comprehensive programme of staff development. For example, managers complete valuable training on coaching, mentoring and managing teams. This helps them to achieve improvements in their departments. Most teachers receive support and time to keep themselves current with industry standards. Leaders are mindful of staff well-being and implement a range of strategies to support them.

Governors are highly motivated and have the relevant experience to undertake their roles. They scrutinise performance through a comprehensive committee meeting structure. They support and challenge leaders appropriately and work closely with them to drive improvements. Governors frequently visit the college, triangulate what leaders tell them, and know the college well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Increase attendance rates for students on education programmes for young people on those courses with poor attendance.
- Support the few teachers who need to develop their skills in planning, how they provide explanations and their use of assessment.
- Ensure that actions have a positive impact on continuing to improve retention and achievement rates on GCSE English and mathematics and for the remaining courses where it is too low.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130762
Address	Monks Road Lincoln Lincolnshire LN2 5HQ
Contact number	01522876000
Website	www.lincolncollege.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Mark Locking
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	13–16 March 2018
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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