

City of Wolverhampton College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130484

Name of lead inspector: Paul Joyce HMI

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

Address: Paget Road
Wolverhampton
WV6 0DU

Telephone number: 01902 836000

Information about the provider

1. City of Wolverhampton College is a large general further education college located in an area of high economic and social deprivation. The local unemployment rate is above the national rate and the proportion of pupils leaving school with at least five GCSE passes at A* to C, including mathematics and English, is below the national average. The college offers courses in all subject sector areas but the largest numbers of students are enrolled on health, public services and care, and on preparation for life and work courses. The college has its own work-based learning contract and provides education and training for pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools.
2. Courses are offered on a full- and part-time day and evening basis from pre-entry to higher-education level. At the time of inspection 3,362 students aged 16 to 18 attended the college, with most studying full-time courses. A further 3,938 adult students were on courses mostly attending part time. In addition some 3,106 students were on work-based learning programmes as apprentices, advanced apprentices or on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace. A further 256 pupils aged 14 to 16 attended college courses from local schools.
3. The majority of students are recruited from Wolverhampton, with smaller numbers attending from the surrounding local authority districts in the West Midlands. The majority of the college population is White British with around 30% of students from minority ethnic groups. The college's mission is: 'To support the development and regeneration of Wolverhampton and its region by providing education, training and skill development to enhance individual, community and economic prosperity'.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - Shrewsbury College of Art and Technology
 - Walford and North Shropshire College
 - Princes Trust
 - Heantun Housing Association
 - Wolverhampton YMCA
 - Premier Skills Coaching
 - Formula Gfi
 - Incomm Business Services Ltd
 - Security and Education Facilities education Ltd
 - TOPPs Ltd
 - JS Consultants UK Ltd
 - 1st2Achieve Training Ltd

- GB Training Ltd
- Wolverhampton City Council
- Qualitrain Ltd
- BitbyBit Consultancy

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16 Further education (16 to 18) Foundation learning	510 part-time learners 1,410 part-time learners 2,635 full-time learners 327 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	1,007 full-time learners 3,900 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	3,663 learners 1,176 apprentices
Adult and community learning	214 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 4
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Capacity to improve	Grade 4
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	4
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	4
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	Grade
Health, social care and child care	4
Science and mathematics	3
Construction	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	4
Visual and performing arts	4

Overall effectiveness

- City of Wolverhampton College is inadequate. Success rates are below corresponding national averages and below those of providers with similar socio-economic characteristics. Too many students leave their course of study before the planned end date and of those that remain too few successfully achieve the intended qualification aim. Too many students make insufficient progress and fail to achieve to their full potential.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies considerably across the college. The most effective teaching enables students to make good progress and is motivating and engaging. However, in too many lessons, students' attendance rates are low or teachers do not set sufficiently challenging work. The quality of marking and feedback provided to students is too variable and in too many cases is insufficiently detailed.

7. The college offers a broad range of courses with appropriate progression routes in most curriculum areas; however, student progression rates from one level to the next are low. The college has a wide range of partnerships with many different organisations that enhance the curriculum and benefit students and the local community.
8. Students speak highly of the pastoral care, guidance and support provided by the college. Additional learning support and the support provided by the college's central support services are good. However, initial advice and guidance and the academic support provided in curriculum areas through tutorials and attendance and progress monitoring are inadequate.
9. Governors, leaders and managers have not taken sufficiently robust action to address a significant decline in performance. Quality improvement actions have insufficient impact and self-assessment is over-generous in its grading. Arrangements for safeguarding students and the promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory. The college is in a weak financial position and does not have the capacity required to make the necessary improvements.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. Success rates are below or well below national averages both for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults at all levels. Success rates are below those of providers that serve areas with similar socio-economic characteristics. Success rates on many courses and for most student groups, including those from minority ethnic groups are low.
- Too many students leave their course early without achieving and of those that remain too few achieve the intended qualification aim. Attendance rates are low on many courses and students do not make the progress expected or achieve to their full potential. Students develop satisfactory vocational skills and produce work of a satisfactory standard but too many are not supported effectively to ensure that they complete all course requirements.
- Success rates on work-based learning programmes are satisfactory although too few students complete their course within the timescale set. Success rates on work-based courses vary considerably between curriculum areas and for different age groups. Those on engineering courses are high but overall success rates for apprentices over 24 years of age are very low.
- Students mostly feel safe at college and are adequately informed of risks. They have the knowledge and understanding to make informed choices about their health and well-being. Literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactorily developed. Students that remain on courses enjoy college life and make a good contribution to the community through significant charitable fundraising activities.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall although the quality of teaching varies significantly across the college.

The most effective teaching motivates and engages students and enables them to make good progress. Less successful lessons do not sufficiently challenge students or involve them in meaningful activity. Students' attendance in lessons is low on many courses and this adversely affects learning and progress.

- Accommodation and resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Workshops, salons and studios in many curriculum areas are well equipped and provide good learning environments. However, in other curriculum areas accommodation and resources are tired and access to information learning technology (ILT) is restricted. Assessment practice is satisfactory although the quality of marking and feedback is variable.
- The college offers a broad curriculum with progression routes from entry level through to higher education. Progression rates from one level to the next are low and too many students leave the college with an unknown destination. Partnership working is good. The college works with a wide range of partners to enhance the curriculum. Links with community organisation are strong and are particularly effective in engaging with under-represented groups.
- Guidance and support are inadequate. Initial advice and guidance are not always effective in explaining course requirements and expectations. Tutorial support is ineffective and does not ensure that students' progress or attendance are adequately monitored. Additional learning support is good and the support provided by the college's central support services is valued by many students with wide ranging personal and welfare needs.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The quality of provision has deteriorated and the performance of the college has declined significantly since the last inspection. Quality assurance arrangements are ineffective and have not improved success rates or the quality of teaching. Internal lesson observers are over-generous in their grading and managers did not complete the appraisals of all their staff in 2010/11.
- Governors and managers agree ambitious educational and financial targets, but these are often not achieved. Governors have not always been fully aware of the expected students' success rates or financial outturns. Managers at all levels do not monitor progress against targets sufficiently consistently and rigorously to ensure their achievement. The college is in a weak financial position and faces considerable challenges.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The availability of equality and diversity data is much improved. The college analyses the success rates of different groups of students and has been successful in narrowing the achievement gaps between some, but not all, groups of students. The college has been slow in introducing a single equalities scheme. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and health and safety matters are managed appropriately.
- Self-assessment is ineffective. The report is too descriptive and does not evaluate the effectiveness of provision for students. The report's content is insufficiently self-critical and grades over-generous. Enthusiastic and motivated quality resources coordinators have been recently appointed to improve the

implementation of quality assurance and self-assessment processes but it is too early to judge their impact on improving outcomes for students.

What does City of Wolverhampton College need to do to improve further?

- Urgently raise success rates for all groups of students by ensuring that attendance and progress are more effectively monitored and by providing more effective support to ensure that students complete all the requirements of their course in order to achieve the intended qualification aim.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teaching is planned to meet individual students' needs and ability levels. Use teaching strategies that motivate and engage students in memorable learning activities. Ensure that students are sufficiently challenged to make good progress and achieve well.
- Ensure that all teachers provide detailed feedback to students at timely intervals that clearly inform them of what they need to do to improve their work, to make progress and to achieve to their full potential.
- Increase the proportion of students progressing from one level to the next by providing timely advice and guidance and by raising students' aspirations and expectations. Reduce the number of students leaving the college with an unknown destination by accurately collecting progression data.
- Significantly strengthen guidance and support arrangements to ensure that initial advice and guidance adequately inform students of course requirements and expectations by producing detailed course information literature and by developing the knowledge and skills of staff providing information.
- Strengthen tutorial provision to enhance the effectiveness of the support provided in monitoring students' progress and attendance by introducing clearly defined procedures for staff to follow and by quality assuring the process.
- Significantly enhance the effectiveness of governance, leadership and management by implementing improvement actions to remedy the weaknesses identified at inspection. Rapidly improve success rates and the financial health of the college to ensure continued viability of provision.
- Enhance the quality of self-assessment and increase the rigour and consistency of quality assurance arrangements by providing training for leaders and managers in monitoring and evaluation practice. Develop managers so they are able to implement improvement actions in a systematic and timely manner.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the friendly environment
- the caring nature of staff
- the good resources at the Wellington Road Campus
- the personal and welfare support services
- the highly effective additional learning support
- completing practical work
- meeting friends and gaining confidence.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the advice and guidance about course requirements and expectations
- the access to and use of ILT in lessons
- the accommodation and resources in some areas
- tutorials
- the quality of teaching in some lessons
- help with progressing to further study and to employment
- opportunities to complete work experience.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the friendly and approachable assessors
- the flexibility of college staff
- the facilities at the college
- being kept informed about employees' progress.

What employers would like to see improved:

- aspects of communication
- knowledge of course content
- the options for further training.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

10. Since the last inspection the performance of the college has declined significantly. While the college has improved many of the areas identified as requiring improvement at the last inspection, leaders and managers have not sustained many of the strengths identified, and the quality and effectiveness of provision have deteriorated. Outcomes for students are now inadequate and the financial health of the college is of serious concern.
11. Self-assessment is inaccurate and fails to place sufficient emphasis on the areas for improvement identified by inspectors in both cross-college and curriculum areas. Governors, leaders and managers have not ensured that quality improvement actions are successful in raising levels of performance and many targets have not been met. Curriculum management is not sufficiently focused on improving the quality of provision and outcomes for students. The college is in a weak financial position and failure to secure its income and efficiency targets will place the future of the college in serious jeopardy.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 4

12. Despite improvements in 2010/11 success rates for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults remain below corresponding national averages at all levels. Overall success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are significantly below average especially at intermediate and advanced levels. Data show that success rates for students at the college are below those of providers that operate in areas with similar socio-economic characteristics.
13. Detailed analysis of performance data for 2010/11 show that while the college was successful in narrowing achievement gaps between some groups of students, for other groups achievement gaps widened further. Success rates for the many student groups, including those from different minority ethnic groups, for males and females and for those identified with additional support needs; remain below corresponding national averages and below levels in similar providers. In curriculum areas success rates on most long courses are significantly below national rates and in too many cases they are exceptionally low.
14. Inspection evidence confirms that too many students do not make sufficient progress and fail to achieve to their full potential. Student attendance in lessons is too low and too many students leave their course early without achieving. While most students that remain on courses do produce work of a satisfactory standard overall, too many are not supported effectively to ensure all the requirements of their courses are completed to enable them to achieve well. In

too many instances students are not given sufficiently detailed guidance to support them to improve and make progress.

15. Completion rates on work-based learning programmes have improved to around the national average rate and are satisfactory, although too few students complete their apprenticeship within the agreed timescale. Success rates vary on work-based learning programmes and in some curriculum areas they are high. However, for apprentices over 24 years of age overall success rates are very low. Apprentices generally make satisfactory progress and produce work to appropriate industrial standards.
16. Students are satisfactorily informed about risks and are able to make informed choices about their safety, health and well-being. They make a good contribution to the life of the college and are involved in numerous fund-raising activities to support community groups and other charities. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Most students report feeling safe at the college and many appreciate the caring nature of the staff and the significant personal and welfare support provided.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although the quality of teaching varies considerably across the college and in too many lessons attendance rates are low. The small number of lessons judged to be outstanding involved students undertaking practical work, but in general both theory and practical lessons vary in quality. In the better lessons, students are set challenging tasks and work hard. Teachers keep the lesson moving at a brisk pace and use questions well to check students' understanding. In less effective lessons, teachers do not set students tasks that challenge them sufficiently to ensure that they make good progress. In some of these lessons, although students are engaged in activities, they are not learning enough. In the very few inadequate lessons, students become quickly bored and distracted because lessons are poorly planned and do not meet individual needs. In general, classroom management is effective and lessons further develop students' knowledge and understanding or enhance their practical skills, but in a few cases teachers do not exercise sufficient control and direction over the group and this inhibits learning and progress.
18. Assessment is satisfactory. Marks awarded to students' work are fair and internal verification systems are effective in ensuring that students reach the expected standards that their qualifications require. Inspection evidence confirms that there is significant variation in the quality and detail of teachers' feedback to students on how to improve their work. In some subject areas students receive detailed and helpful comments on their work, but in others this is lacking. Many teachers use ILT well in their lessons, but not all rooms are well equipped with the technology to support this. In a few cases teachers do not make full use of the technology they have to enthuse their students. The

use of the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) is developing well although some areas use this to greater effect than others. Learning resource centres provide comfortable and welcoming spaces in which to work, with good access to computers.

19. The college invests heavily in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and providing support for teachers. A wide range of staff development opportunities are available and support to help teachers to improve their work is easily accessible. However, not all teachers use this service to its full potential to improve the quality of teaching and learning and good practice is not always shared extensively. College lesson observation records generally identify and record appropriate strengths and weaknesses, but often fail to give sufficient weight to some of the areas for development identified when awarding a grade to the lesson. The college paints too generous a picture of the overall quality of teaching and learning across the college. Observation practice does not include reviewing students' work and their files to enable judgements to be made about the quality of marking and feedback.
20. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of users is satisfactory. A broad curriculum is offered in most subject areas with progression routes that enable students to study from pre-entry to higher education level. However, progression rates from one level to the next are low. The college is successful in recruiting under-represented groups and social inclusion is good. Work-based learning programmes satisfactorily meet the needs of employers and the quality of provision for apprentices is satisfactory. The range of activities provided that enable students to develop skills that contribute to their personal development is satisfactory overall. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed appropriately but some students have too few opportunities to undertake work experience or to go on educational visits.
21. Partnership working is good and the college actively seeks to promote and develop initiatives that meet local and national priorities. The college works particularly well with a broad range of organisations to either support or develop provision for the wider community. Links with organisations such as the Princes Trust, Job Centre Plus and with local employers are extensive and well developed. Employers make a significant and positive contribution to the quality of the learning experience in some curriculum areas and have funded new learning resources and provided student and staff training opportunities. However, links with employers and with other partners to enhance the curriculum for the benefit of students are not this well developed in all curriculum areas.
22. Guidance and support are inadequate. Academic guidance and support, including initial advice and guidance, tutorial support and progression advice and guidance are ineffective. Too many students report that initial advice and guidance do not make course requirements or expectations sufficiently clear. Guidance and support arrangements do not effectively monitor students' attendance or progress and on many courses both attendance and retention

rates are too low. Tutorial support is too variable and in many cases tutorial time is not used for its intended purpose. The college recognises that tutorial provision is inconsistent and has recently introduced a new system to monitor students' progress. However, not all tutors are using the facility and those that do are not always setting sufficiently challenging targets to monitor and improve students' attendance or progress.

23. Students are appreciative of the caring nature of staff, and the support provided for many students with wide ranging personal and welfare needs is good. Initial assessment arrangements are appropriate and results are used to inform the planning of additional support. The provision of additional learning support is good and students in receipt of support achieve much better than those students who do not receive support. Careers advice and guidance are not sufficiently systematic to ensure that all students are appropriately guided towards educational progression or employment and the proportion of students leaving the college with an unknown destination is too high.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

24. The Principal and senior managers, supported by governors, set ambitious targets which focus on local, regional and national priorities. The college strategy to build a bridge between disadvantage and opportunity is very clear. However, many of the targets set, especially those relating to student success rates and financial health, have not been achieved. Outcomes for students have not improved over the last three years, pass rates have declined over this time and retention rates remain below average. Curriculum management is not sufficiently focused on improving outcomes for students and is inadequate in three of the curriculum areas inspected. Financial concerns are significant; the college is in a weak financial position and faces significant challenges in the short term. The leadership and management of work-based learning provision are satisfactory.
25. Governors have not sufficiently held the college to account for its academic or financial performance and have not been successful in ensuring that educational and financial targets have been achieved. Governors have not always been fully aware of the expected students' success rates or financial outturns and are frustrated at the delays in improving outcomes for students so they are at least comparable with those from colleges which serve areas of similar deprivation. Governors are concerned about the college's financial position. The proportions of female governors and of governors from a minority ethnic background are below those of the student body and the communities the college serves.
26. Managers have produced appropriate policies and procedures to promote good practice in health and safety and safeguarding. Accidents are recorded carefully and reported to external agencies appropriately. Following a risk assessment, staff are allowed to start work at the college while checks on their suitability to

work with children and vulnerable adults are pending. Action plans indicate that such staff are accompanied at all times. Staff are very committed to supporting students at risk of abuse. The security presence and entry restrictions at the Paget Road campus have improved access control although these can be circumvented. Staff promote safeguarding for apprentices through reviews and on-site visits satisfactorily.

27. The quality and quantity of data on equality and diversity have improved significantly. The college now collects and analyses data for most areas of work, including for staff recruitment and selection. Managers in most curriculum areas have produced equality and diversity impact measures and the college analyses the performance of different groups of students. Managers have been slow to produce a draft single equality scheme that encompasses all the protected characteristics of equalities legislation although separate policies covering race, gender and disability are in place. Managers have amended the grievance process so that its ease of use and response times have improved. Managers, staff and students engage very effectively and creatively with a wide range of external stakeholders to promote and develop community cohesion. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is satisfactory. Apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity, rights and responsibilities is satisfactory, but the reinforcement of such matters in reviews is cursory.
28. Managers have given a high priority to seeking the views of students through questionnaires, open fora and campus meetings. In most cases, their views are heard and acted on promptly with managers provide good feedback. Improvements have been made to provision as a result of student feedback although in a minority of cases, students are unaware of responses to their suggestions. The views of external partners are sought by curriculum areas and identified strengths and areas for improvement are considered when evaluating the effectiveness of provision. However, senior managers do not use a systematic and rigorous process to obtain the views of external stakeholders to inform the cross-college self-assessment report and action plan.
29. The self-assessment process involves staff and students and is very comprehensive; however, the resulting report is too descriptive and lacks evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of provision. The report does not contain action plans for leadership and management or governance and does not consider the college's capacity to improve in any detail. It is insufficiently self-critical and the grades awarded for many aspects are over-generous. Quality improvement processes have not been successful in improving the quality of provision or outcomes for students quickly enough. Quality resource coordinators have recently been appointed to work with curriculum course teams to strengthen quality improvement activity but it is too early to judge the impact of their high levels of energy and commitment. The self-assessment report for work-based programmes is not sufficiently critical or evaluative and concentrates on contract, claims and compliance rather than the effectiveness and quality of provision for students. More than a third of staff were not

appraised in 2010/11. The quality assurance and monitoring of service areas are underdeveloped.

30. The quality of accommodation at the Wellington Road site is good, whilst that at the Paget Road campus is satisfactory. Resources are good in motor vehicle, sport, hairdressing and beauty therapy, construction and at the polymer centre but in engineering many resources are outdated. Managers have made satisfactory progress in developing sustainability policies and practices. Financial reserves are low and financial management and controls are ineffective, with high levels of expenditure on staff and low levels of staff and room utilisation. The financial outturn last year was considerably below target. Student success rates are low. The college provides inadequate value for money.

Subject areas

Health, social care and child care

Grade 4

Context

31. The college offers courses from foundation to higher education level in both health and social care and childcare. At the time of inspection 511 students were enrolled on courses, of which 257 were aged 16 to 18, and of these 244 attended full time. Most of the 254 adult students enrolled attended on a part-time basis. The majority of students are female and most are from a White British background.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. In 2010/11 headline success rates on long courses in both health and social care and childcare were well below corresponding national rates. Success rates on the majority of courses in both areas are below average. Those on the intermediate health and social care course and on the intermediate and advanced childcare courses are below stipulated minimum levels of performance.
- Too many students leave their course before the planned end date without achieving. Retention rates in 2010/11 were low on both health and social care and child-care courses. At the time of inspection in-year retention rates on health and social care courses remain low. Student attendance rates are low especially on health and social care courses.
- The standard of students' work is satisfactory overall but varies between courses. The standard of work on childcare courses is generally higher than that on health and social care courses. Students make a positive contribution to the community and feel safe at the college and in their work placements. Risk assessments for work-experience placements are rigorous and are reviewed frequently.
- The quality of provision is inadequate. Teaching and learning are inadequate with too many lessons in health and social care failing to meet the needs of students. Many students on health and social care courses make insufficient progress. Teaching and learning on childcare courses are more effective and students generally make better progress. Assessment practice is satisfactory and meets qualification requirements.
- In the most effective lessons, usually on childcare courses, teachers plan learning to engage and motivate students. They encourage interaction and co-operative learning and ensure the development of skills and knowledge. Links between theory and practical application in the workplace are clearly made and this helps develop students' understanding.
- In less successful lessons, usually in health and social care, teachers are over-reliant on the use of worksheets and handouts. Students do not develop sufficient knowledge and understanding of the topic being covered and often

become bored and inattentive. High levels of staff absence in health and social care and inadequate cover for lessons has had a negative impact on learning and student progress is slow.

- The range of provision satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of students. Courses are offered from foundation to higher education level with good progression routes across health and social care and childcare courses. However, progression rates between one level and the next, to higher education, and into employment are low.
- Partnership working is good and is used effectively to enhance the curriculum for the benefit of students. Links with the local authority play council and the care ambassador scheme enable students to further develop their skills and knowledge and provide opportunities for further study and employment.
- Guidance and support are inadequate. While students on childcare courses do have regular opportunities to discuss their progress, on health and social care courses tutorial provision is inadequate and students do not have sufficient opportunities to discuss pastoral or academic issues. Students' attendance and progress are not effectively monitored and students are not adequately supported to achieve to their full potential.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The self-assessment report is over-generous in its grading and does not adequately identify the significant weaknesses in the quality of provision and outcomes for students. Quality improvement actions have not had sufficient impact and student feedback and data are not used effectively to aid improvement.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Students have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity issues. Teachers adequately promote equality and diversity in lessons and encourage students to consider and value different cultures and beliefs. However, opportunities are missed in lessons to further promote and reinforce students' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity themes.
- Resources to support teaching and learning, especially in childcare, and the sharing of good practice are inadequate. Childcare students have limited access to ILT such as interactive whiteboards and are unable to develop the skills required for the workplace. Courses are located on different sites and students and staff do not have regular opportunities to share good practice and interact with each other.

What does City of Wolverhampton College need to do to improve further?

- Urgently raise success rates by ensuring that guidance and support arrangements are more effective at monitoring student attendance and progress. Ensure that students receive frequent tutorials to review progress against specific and measurable targets to help them achieve.
- Significantly improve the quality of teaching, especially on health and social care courses, by ensuring the consistency of staffing and by sharing good practice between health and social care and childcare teaching teams.

- Provide more access to ILT resources, particularly for students on childcare courses, to enable them to develop the skills required in workplaces.
- Enhance students' understanding of equality and diversity by developing staff awareness and confidence to promote and reinforce key messages in lessons whenever opportunities arise.
- Enhance the effectiveness of curriculum leadership by developing managers' skills to self-assess more effectively and to monitor and evaluate provision accurately. Enable managers to implement improvement actions in a more timely manner.

Science and mathematics

Grade 3

Context

32. The college offers advanced-level courses in biology, chemistry, physics, human biology, mathematics and in forensic and medical science, and intermediate-level courses in mathematics and science. At inspection 532 students aged 16 to 18 and 288 adults students were on courses. The majority of students study part time with 172 on full-time courses. Almost two thirds of students are female and approximately one fifth are from minority ethnic groups.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Success rates are broadly average overall although vary on different courses. The proportion of students gaining high grades is average overall although on the GCSE mathematics course a greater proportion of students achieve high-grade passes than is the case nationally. Retention and attendance rates are satisfactory and have improved when compared to the previous year.
- Students develop confidence and improve their communication, literacy, numeracy and teamwork skills. They are highly motivated to learn in many lessons. The proportion of students who progress from intermediate to advanced level within each subject, and the proportion progressing to higher education is satisfactory. The standard of students' work is satisfactory and they develop appropriate knowledge and understanding related to their course.
- Students feel safe whilst at college and appreciate the reassuring presence of the security staff at all sites. Students have a good understanding of safe working practice and use safety equipment in science laboratories as required. They are adequately informed about risks and have the knowledge and understanding to make informed choices about their health, safety and well-being.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good and enable students to learn and make progress. The best lessons are characterised by challenging activities designed to motivate and engage students in problem solving tasks. In these lessons teachers frequently check learning through directed questioning and good use is made of peer assessment to develop students' confidence and independence.
- In the minority of less successful lessons teachers do not use a wide enough range of strategies to ensure that the needs of individual students are met. These lessons are often too teacher dominated and do not engage students sufficiently in learning, consequently they do not always make the progress expected.
- Additional learning support is highly effective. Students benefit from the additional support provided both in classes and in science and mathematics workshops. Students that receive additional support often achieve better than

their peers. However, in a minority of cases, students that request additional support during their course of study do not always receive it in a timely manner.

- The range of courses satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of students. Courses are offered during the day and in the evenings with students able to move from intermediate to advanced level on academic courses. However, the college does not offer vocational courses at intermediate level and entry to vocational science courses is limited to advanced level study only.
- Partnerships are satisfactory. The college has links with a number of educational institutions including local universities. Communication with parents of younger students is satisfactory and they are adequately informed of the extent of progress through invitations to parents' evenings throughout the year.
- Guidance and support are satisfactory. However, advice and guidance provided to students at the start of their course does not always adequately inform them of course requirements or make expectations clear. Arrangements to monitor and support students' progress are satisfactory although the targets set for students to achieve are not always useful in aiding progress. Students receive appropriate advice and guidance when making university applications.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have taken action to improve attendance and to reduce the number of students that leave their course early without achieving. In-year attendance and retention rates are satisfactory. Staff training in improving the monitoring of student progress is starting to have a beneficial impact on raising standards although it is too early to judge the full impact of this on student success rates.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Equality and diversity are promoted adequately through the curriculum and in lessons although not all staff have a sufficiently detailed understanding of key issues to ensure that best practice is effectively promoted and reinforced. Students' understanding of equality and diversity issues is satisfactory.
- Self-assessment is weak. The report is too descriptive and does not effectively evaluate the quality of provision. While managers and staff are aware of many of the areas for improvement identified at inspection, self-assessment and the resulting improvement plan do not provide a clear focus on where to target improvement activity nor form a basis for monitoring and evaluating improvement actions.

What does City of Wolverhampton College need to do to improve further?

- Raise success rates to at least national averages on all courses by ensuring that students' attendance and progress are more effectively monitored. Ensure that teaching is sufficiently challenging in all lessons and that targets are set and monitored throughout the year that are useful in aiding student progress.
- Ensure that students who request additional learning support during their course of study receive more timely guidance and support to help them improve their work and achieve higher grades.

- Ensure that initial advice and guidance are sufficiently detailed so students are fully aware of course requirements and expectations prior to enrolling on courses.
- Enhance the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons by providing training for staff to raise their awareness and understanding of key equality and diversity issues. Evaluate the impact of development activity on students' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity matters.
- Enhance the quality of self-assessment by providing training to managers and staff that enable them to more effectively monitor and evaluate performance and to implement improvement actions in a more systematic manner.

Construction

Grade 3

Context

33. The college offers courses from entry level through to higher-education level. Courses include painting and decorating, ground works, plumbing, trowel trades, wood occupations and technical and professional courses in construction and the built environment and in civil engineering. At inspection approximately 610 students were enrolled on courses, most of whom are male aged 16 to 18, attending full time and from a White British background.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are below average. However, success rates improved significantly in 2010/11 and provision continues to improve with current students making satisfactory progress and achieving as expected. Success rates for adult students are satisfactory. In-year retention and attendance rates have improved.
- Completion rates on work-based learning programmes are above corresponding national averages and many students complete within agreed timescales. Students on work-based learning courses produce work to industrial standards and work confidently and competently.
- The standard of students' practical work is high and most develop good vocational skills for the level at which they are working. Students on all courses produce a satisfactory standard of written work in evidence portfolios. The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory.
- Students report feeling safe and adopt safe working practices in college workshops. Health and safety are appropriately promoted and reinforced during lessons. Students on college-based courses have a good understanding of health and safety matters. Students on work-based programmes adopt safe working practices on site and understand their responsibilities.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good and most lessons are planned well with clear learning aims. Behaviour and classroom management are particularly good and teachers have productive working relationships with their students that enhance learning. Students benefit from the considerable industrial experience and expertise of their teachers that is used well to enhance their knowledge and understanding.
- The best practical lessons are well attended and enable students to develop good practical skills and produce work of an industrial standard. Students develop their theoretical knowledge during these lessons and adopt an analytical and self-critical approach to their work. Students benefit from an appropriate blend of good individual coaching, group demonstrations and clear instruction from the teacher.

- In the less effective lessons, some students are allowed to be spectators rather than active participants and others are allowed to dominate classroom discussion. In a few lessons students are expected to learn by listening to the teacher talking and students are not sufficiently challenged by the work set. Teaching, training and assessment for work-based students are satisfactory.
- The range of provision satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of students and employers. Careful curriculum planning has resulted in clear pathways within courses and good progression opportunities between levels. However, the current economic climate in the construction industry is a barrier to many students wishing to move along these pathways especially onto apprenticeship programmes.
- Partnership working is good. Students benefit from productive links that have been formed with companies that provide resources, equipment and funding for practical workshops. Good working relationships with large companies provide work-placement opportunities for students and have resulted in employment for some following the completion of their course.
- Guidance and support are satisfactory. Recent and fundamental changes to tutorial arrangements are providing students with better support and staff now monitor students' progress more effectively. Students receive good additional support while on courses. Initial advice and guidance are not always sufficiently explicit or detailed. Students do not always fully appreciate the expectations of the course or the demands of the construction industry.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Changes to the management team have had a positive impact on the department. New managers have taken effective actions to raise success rates. Staff are well supported to meet departmental targets and success rates improved significantly in 2010/11. Managers and staff are now using data and management information effectively to improve provision.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and followed by staff. The success rates of different student groups are monitored effectively and targets are set for improvement. Students have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity issues but teachers often miss opportunities to further promote and reinforce equality and diversity in lessons or during reviews.
- Self-assessment is underdeveloped. The report is too descriptive and does not sufficiently evaluate the quality of provision. However, quality improvement planning is comprehensive and managers know the main strengths and areas for improvement. The college uses students' views extensively in self-assessment but other than this does little to feed back to students or take action in response to concerns raised.
- Accommodation and resources are good. The provision is housed in a new purpose built facility. Workshops are large, spacious and well equipped. Technician support is good and the workshops are clean and tidy. Staff and students appreciate and respect the high quality resources.

What does City of Wolverhampton College need to do to improve further?

- Raise success rates by continuing to develop and implement new tutorial arrangements that effectively monitor students' attendance and progress. Ensure that initial advice and guidance make clear the requirements and expectations of courses and of the construction industry.
- Ensure that students are sufficiently challenged, motivated and engaged in all lessons by sharing best practice in the teaching of theory and practical between different course teams.
- Enhance students' understanding of equality and diversity by developing staff awareness and confidence to promote and reinforce key messages in lessons whenever opportunities arise.
- Ensure that student views are acted upon to improve provision where appropriate and that they are provided with feedback that informs them what action has been taken in response to the views provided.
- Enhance the quality of self-assessment by providing training to managers and staff that enable them to more effectively evaluate performance and to make judgements about the quality and effectiveness of provision.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 4

Context

34. The college offers courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy from foundation to advanced level. Courses include nail services, barbering and spa therapy. At inspection approximately 580 students were enrolled on college-based courses and 332 were on work-based programmes. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and most college-based students study full time. The majority are female with approximately 30% of students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. Success rates are very low on most college-based courses other than on African-type hair and spa-therapy courses where success rates are high. Too many students leave their course before the planned end date without achieving. Completion rates on work-based learning programmes are satisfactory although too few achieve within the timescales set.
- The standard of students' work is satisfactory overall. Advanced-level students demonstrate some very creative and highly technical skills. There are insufficient clients for students in practical classes at the college. Progression rates into employment are low from college-based courses. Students on work-based programmes develop good practical skills and work to professional standards.
- Students feel safe and enjoy college life. They adopt safe working practices in salons and in the workplace and use personal protective equipment when completing hazardous tasks. Students make a good contribution to the community and are involved in fund raising activities for a wide range of diverse local and national charities. Students enter high-profile competitions which helps them to develop skills and confidence.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and staff have productive working relationships with their students. Teaching in practical lessons is generally more effective than in theory classes. Teaching, training and assessment for work-based students are satisfactory and enable the development of good practical skills.
- The most effective teaching fully engages students with challenging and enjoyable learning tasks that effectively develop their knowledge and skills. In less successful lessons, ineffective use is made of the time available as students wait for clients to work on, or in theory lessons students spend too much time copying work into their paper-based note books.
- The range of provision is good at meeting the needs and interests of students and employers. Students are able to access a wide range of progression pathways in many different disciplines. Hairdressing courses are available for

African and European hair. Enrichment activities are good with students able to achieve additional qualifications that enhance their employability prospects.

- Partnership working is satisfactory overall. Relationships are good between the college and employers of students on work-based courses. However, partnerships with local employers to enhance the curriculum and the learning experience for college-based students are underdeveloped. Too few students undertake sufficient real-life work experience or progress into employment within the hair and beauty sector.
- Guidance and support are inadequate. The monitoring of students' progress has improved but it is too early to judge the impact on raising success rates. Guidance and support to aid students progressing from one level to the next or into employment are not sufficiently detailed or focused on students eventual career aims. Initial advice and guidance does not always take sufficient account of students' prior level of attainment or experience.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Success rates have been exceptionally low for too long and actions to improve provision have been ineffective. Recent changes in management are improving provision but it is too early to judge the full impact of these positive changes in raising student success rates.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Equality and diversity are embedded in lesson planning and students are confident working on a range of different racial hair types and skin tones. However, teachers often miss opportunities to promote or reinforce broader issues of equality and diversity in lessons and through the curriculum.
- Accommodation and resources are good. Salons are well equipped and provide good learning environments. The commercial high street academy, in partnership with a high-profile franchise organisation, is used well to support advanced level students learning and development. Facilities are of high quality and are used to support the professional development of staff.
- Self-assessment is underdeveloped. The report is too descriptive and does not evaluate the quality of provision for students. Grades awarded are over-generous and resulting action plans have not been successful in improving outcomes for students.

What does City of Wolverhampton College need to do to improve further?

- Urgently raise success rates by providing more effective guidance and support to help students achieve. Closely monitor student attendance and frequently review their progress against clearly defined and measurable achievement targets.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers plan lessons to meet individual students' needs and ability levels. Increase the number of clients in salons and further promote equality and diversity through discussion and debate in lessons.

- Significantly strengthen guidance and support arrangements by providing staff training to ensure the information provided takes account of students' career aspirations and considers their prior attainment and ability levels.
- Enhance the effectiveness of partnership working to benefit students on college-based courses by developing more effective links with employers that enable opportunities for work placement.
- Enhance the effectiveness of curriculum leadership by developing managers' skills to self-assess more effectively and to monitor and evaluate provision accurately. Enable managers to implement improvement actions in a more timely manner.

Visual and performing arts

Grade 4

Context

35. The college offers a range of courses in visual and performing arts, including music technology, art and design, fashion and performing arts. The majority of courses are at advanced level and include extended diplomas, certificates and awards. At inspection 321 students were enrolled on courses with the majority of students aged 16 to 18 attending full time. Just over half the students are female and approximately a quarter are from minority ethnic groups.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. Success rates on many courses in both visual and performing arts are significantly below national averages and success rates on functional skill courses are low. However, success rates on the certificate in music technology, the diploma in foundation studies and the diploma in performing arts are high.
- Too many students leave their course of study before the planned end date without achieving. Retention rates on many courses are low and in some cases continue to decline. Too many students that start on the extended diploma courses leave before completing the course. Those students who stay on the course achieve well. Strategies to improve retention have not yet had sufficient impact. Attendance rates vary and are too low on many courses.
- Students gain confidence and self-esteem. They produce work of a satisfactory standard overall, although the quality of work varies between courses and is good in some areas. Students develop good specialist skills and there is a vocational emphasis on work produced. Most students enjoy college life and feel safe; they use safe working practices in practical studios and understand the potential dangers of specialist equipment.
- Students make satisfactory use of a range of community projects to develop their skills in public performance. Students on performing arts courses participate in regular productions in local theatres and venues and work with local schools during taster day events. Music technology students demonstrate their technical skills in setting up professional equipment for music performances in a city centre venue.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Most lessons are planned well and clearly identify what students are expected to achieve. The more effective lessons are highly motivating and energising, and students engage enthusiastically in a range of stimulating practical activities.
- In less successful lessons teachers do not use questioning effectively to assess understanding and consolidate learning. The professional experience of teachers benefits students by raising aspirations and gaining current industry

knowledge. Assessment practices are satisfactory with detailed written feedback provided to students.

- The range of provision satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of students. The range of subjects and levels provides students with progression routes from foundation to higher level, although internal progression rates are low. Enrichment opportunities include visits to theatres and galleries, working with the Royal Shakespeare Company and other theatre groups and a wide range of guest speakers who are professional practising artists or performers.
- Partnership working is good. Beneficial and productive links with local theatres with professionals enhance the curriculum and benefit students. Links with the National Skills Academy, where the college has founder college status, enables students on music technology courses to gain valuable vocational experience through participating in public performances. Students benefit from productive links with other employers through 'Creative Apprenticeships'.
- Guidance and support are inadequate. Initial advice and guidance do not adequately prepare students for course requirements or make clear expectations. Tutorial support has not been effective in monitoring or improving students' attendance rates nor in ensuring that students make sufficient progress to achieve to their full potential.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Actions to improve student success rates have not been successful. The process for the observation of teaching and learning is insufficiently rigorous with grades awarded by internal observers being over-generous. Good practice is not effectively shared between teaching teams. Self-assessment is not sufficiently self-critical. The report is too descriptive and fails to evaluate effectively or accurately the quality of provision.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff work hard to remove barriers to learning so that all students can participate fully. Assignments are devised to further develop students' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity themes. Social and educational inclusion is good with students recruited from diverse backgrounds. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and appropriate risk assessments are completed.
- Specialist accommodation and resources are good. Dance, acting and music technology facilities are very good. Displays of work in some rooms are inspiring, but some studios have little work displayed and rooms are tired. Specialist music technology software is available on large numbers of computers to support students' work. Teachers are well qualified and use their industrial experience to promote learning.

What does City of Wolverhampton College need to do to improve further?

- Urgently raise success rates by providing more effective guidance and support to help students to achieve. Closely monitor students' attendance and frequently review their progress against clearly defined and measurable achievement targets during tutorials.

- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by sharing best practice between teaching teams and by ensuring that teachers plan lessons to meet individual students' needs and ability levels. Use questioning techniques effectively to check frequently students' knowledge and understanding.
- Enhance the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons by providing training for staff to raise their awareness and understanding of key equality and diversity issues. Evaluate the impact of development activity on students' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity matters.
- Significantly strengthen guidance and support arrangements by ensuring that initial advice and guidance are sufficiently detailed so that students are fully aware of course requirements and expectations prior to enrolling on courses.
- Enhance the effectiveness of curriculum leadership by developing managers' skills to self-assess more effectively and to monitor and evaluate provision accurately. Enable managers to implement improvement actions in a more timely manner.

Information about the inspection

36. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's assistant principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
37. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
City of Wolverhampton College
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	3,220	0	3,052	168	0
Part-time learners	7,442	256	310	3,770	3,106
Overall effectiveness	4	n/a	4	4	3
Capacity to improve	4				
Outcomes for learners	4	3	4	4	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	4				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4				
How well do learners progress?	4				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	4				
How safe do learners feel?	3				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2				
Quality of provision	3	n/a	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3				
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?	4				
Leadership and management	4				
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	4				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	4				
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?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	4				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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