

Worcester Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		09-12 October 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for

This provider is good because:

- Good teaching, learning and assessment throughout the college contribute to positive outcomes for students. Teaching staff are energetic, enthusiastic and strive for students' success. Students are motivated and teachers prepare them well for the demands of their qualification. They make good progress in lessons, are able to analyse well and develop good independent learning skills.
- The improved focus by students and staff on the importance of attendance, homework, and achieving challenging targets has resulted in better outcomes for students new to the college in 2011. Attendance, retention and the achievement of high grades have improved. Staff set students demanding goals and monitor their progress well.
- Extensive enrichment opportunities contribute to students' motivation and understanding of their subject, their personal and social development and build employability skills.
- Good care, guidance and support for students, including additional learning support, underpin student progression and their wider skill development.
- Leaders, managers and governors are committed to providing a high standard of education. They make widespread and productive use of students' views to inform action for improvement. Students are highly satisfied with college provision.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Whilst most teaching is good, not enough is outstanding.
- Teachers do not always plan for the learning needs of all students so a minority do not achieve to their full potential.
- Although success rates have increased for male students, they are still too low.
- Success rates are not consistently high, especially on two-year courses where retention over the two years is too low.
- The college's virtual learning environment is not of a consistently high standard in all subjects so a minority of students are not able to work independently through this medium to improve their grades further.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding lessons through meeting the learning needs of all students and by improving their motivation. Ensure that all students are fully engaged in learning and progressing well.
- Use the full range of information about students, including initial and course assessment, to plan activities, which meet their individual needs. Ensure that all students have the language, literacy, numeracy and personal skills to participate fully in planned activities to achieve their potential.
- Monitor students' progress and achievement consistently across the college so that staff identify promptly those at risk of non-completion or underachievement and provide the appropriate support or curriculum. Senior managers should support middle managers to ensure consistency in standards across all subject areas.
- Research and identify the reasons for the underachievement of male students and put in place the appropriate measures to raise their achievement.
- Share the good practice in teaching teams especially in engaging students in teaching and learning, the use of information learning technology and the virtual learning environment, and promotion of equality and diversity in lessons. Learn from best practice within the further education sector particularly in relation to the needs of students on vocational programmes.
- Strengthen and implement fully the revised arrangements for management of the performance of staff including the observation of teaching and learning. Use data and information better to set targets for improvement, which are more challenging.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Success rates on long qualifications for the college as a whole and for learners aged 16 to 18 have risen to just above the high sixth form college national average. The vast majority of students study qualifications leading to GCE A and AS levels. Success rates on AS level programmes rose in 2011/12 to above the national average. On A level programmes and advanced level vocational courses, they are around the national average. Progression from AS to A level programmes is satisfactory and improving.
- The number of students aged 19 and over has fallen over the years and is now very low. They do not succeed as well as younger students, except on the Access course designed specifically for them. Some courses where adults did not succeed are no longer on offer.
- Success rates are above or around national average in the vast majority of subject areas. However, in health and social care and information technology they are weak because of issues on specific BTEC courses, which managers have now addressed. Success rates on vocational courses in these areas are below those of academic courses.
- Most students make the expected progress towards attaining their learning goals compared to their starting points. In 2010/11 students on AS level programmes made better progress than expected, but those on A level programmes made less progress than expected. In 2011/12 students on AS level courses achieved a greater proportion of high grades than the national average and achievement of college progress targets improved. The proportion of students achieving high grades on vocational qualifications is low, mainly because of poor retention.
- Students make good progress in lessons, are able to work independently and display higher-level analytical skills. They arrive on time and their attendance is good on most programmes,

which is an improvement on previous years. In September 2011, the college 'Flying Start' initiative refocused on student attendance, homework completion, good study habits, and the monitoring of challenging targets. This improved the outcomes for learners new to the college in 2011. However, the improvement in the success of males has been slower than that of female students.

- Student success on courses which build skills in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) at intermediate level and below has improved to above the national average, but the numbers taking these qualifications has declined. All full-time students who have not achieved GCSE English and mathematics enrol on resit qualifications. However, retention is weak for students with low prior grades.
- Students' development of their vocational skill is good in all areas and especially in the arts, languages and sports. Enrichment and employment related opportunities are many and varied across the college and within curriculum areas. These enable students to develop additional skills, confidence and expertise and improve their employability skills, very well.
- Progression into higher education is strong, and students' understanding of careers and progression opportunities is good, including progression into apprenticeships.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment throughout the college contribute to positive outcomes for students. Teachers display energy and enthusiasm. They use a variety of methods and challenging tasks to engage and stimulate students to extend their understanding. Teachers develop independent learning well on most courses. In a small minority of lessons, teachers' expectations of students are insufficiently high and they do not achieve their full potential.
- Care and support for students are good both within classes and through support services. Staff in all roles strive to ensure that learners make good progress. Staff identify and provide additional learning support needs early and effectively. Teachers provide students that are more able with appropriate additional stretch and challenge in most lessons.
- Staff use their skills and expertise well to stimulate and enrich teaching and learning. Students have good attitudes and learn productively. Teachers deliver imaginative and creative learning in most lessons. Resources in a few teaching areas are limited and a minority of rooms are cramped, hindering group work and assessment. An extensive range of professional development aids teaching and support staff to focus on improving learning.
- The large majority of students participate fully in lessons and enjoy their experiences. Teachers generally develop collaborative work and language skills well, but in a small minority of lessons students lack confidence and fluency in the use of specialist language and concepts. Teachers do not always take opportunities to use information and learning technology within lessons. The use of the college virtual learning environment to extend and enrich learning is good in a few subject areas, such as performing arts, languages, geology, critical thinking and physics, but variable in others. Students value and use this resource where it is good.
- Enrichment activities both within courses and across the college are good. The college uses visits and engages community partners very well to add breadth and depth to students' experiences and understanding, particularly in sports, modern foreign languages, social sciences and food technology. These activities support the effective development of employability skills for most students.
- Initial assessment is thorough at identifying the additional support needs of individual students. Students receive targeted additional support for specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The development of English, mathematics and functional skills is satisfactory. Students with a specific need receive additional support in class and teachers in most curriculum areas develop and assess English and functional skills effectively through the main programme of studies. Students on vocational programmes undertake a personal and social development course to

enhance these skills, but the initial assessment does not determine their level of study. Support for the development of numeracy on courses that have limited numerical content is less effective.

- Assessment is thorough and rigorous and enables students to improve. Teachers plan a good range of assessment activities and give constructive feedback to students on a regular basis. Professional development under the Assessment for Learning programme reinforces this good practice. Staff mostly differentiate assessment tasks to provide appropriate challenge for students at different ability levels. The imaginative use of peer assessment develops students’ evaluative skills on a minority of programmes.
- Initial advice and guidance are effective in supporting students to make informed choices about their programmes of study. These contribute to low numbers of students changing course after effective induction activities, which the new Flying Start initiative strengthened. Advice and support on personal and social issues is very good. Support for progression to higher education and employment with training is good. Students speak highly of the college’s support services.
- Managers and staff have established a positive culture in support of equality of opportunity and diversity. The college has good materials for this area and good practice in foreign language and business courses. However, in too many lessons teachers miss opportunities to promote awareness of diversity, despite relevant staff training. Nevertheless, students demonstrate positive attitudes to diversity and are keen to extend their understanding.
- Arrangements for individual learning plans and target setting are in transition to a comprehensive electronic system. It is too early to judge its effectiveness for the current student cohort, with whom staff are currently agreeing formal targets. In 2011, managers and staff improved the setting and robust monitoring of learner targets to support high achievement, an area they identified as needing improvement.

Science	
Learning programmes for 16-18	Good
Learning programmes for 19+	

- In science, teaching, learning and assessment are good and contribute well to students’ learning and progress. In 2011/12, success rates increased markedly in AS single sciences. The proportion of AS students achieving high-grade passes and achieving better than expected grades given their starting points is above the corresponding national average. Students on A level courses generally succeed in line with national averages.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and deliver good exposition and explanations. A minority of staff are examiners; they use their skills well to encourage students to develop the confidence to work independently and strengthen exam question techniques. All students extend their dexterity and observational skills confidently when handling apparatus and chemicals in practical science lessons.
- Most students purposefully engage with the well-planned learning activities that cater for the majority of their needs and abilities. Teachers integrate ICT into many, but not all, science lessons. They encourage students to use the virtual learning environment and other technologies to enhance their learning outside the classroom, which they do with confidence. Students are highly positive about the physics virtual learning environment.
- Teachers have a range of information about their students, but do not always use it well to plan for individual students’ needs. In a few lessons, planning for different needs is insufficient, which results in a small minority of students not making the progress they are capable of.
- Most teaching motivates and energises students. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers channel too much activity through themselves, leading to students being too passive for long

periods. In weaker lessons questioning techniques, although targeted at individuals, do not always encourage group debate or discussion. Learning from peers is often limited to pairs of students reading a text quietly and completing a question sheet. Teachers miss opportunities for students to give presentations and use role plays.

- Students make good progress in lessons. Assessment of learning and feedback is good overall and staff use a wide variety of approaches. Students know their targets and teachers inform them of their progress regularly. Written assessment, robust and frequent formative and summative testing, good target setting and close monitoring ensure students’ progress in lessons. Students on AS and A2 biology courses benefit from peer assessment in exam question practice developed by dedicated science teachers in the department.
- Numeracy development is good in all lessons across all the sciences, where students develop good mathematical manipulation skills, such as calculations involving standard form, moles and molecular formulae. They draw graphs accurately and calculate gradients and percentages very well.
- Staff give detailed advice to students to ensure they select the right course. Students receive advice about choices of AS subjects based on interests and abilities and GCSE qualifications. Induction assessments and individual learning plans help ensure students are on the right course. Students on A2 and access courses are motivated to progress onto university and rate highly the support they receive with UCAS applications from staff.
- Teachers miss opportunities to extend students’ knowledge of equality and diversity in many lessons.

<p>Social Science and Psychology</p> <p>Learning programmes for 16-18</p> <p>Learning programmes for 19+</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good on GCE AS and A Level programmes which reflects the high proportion of students who achieve their qualifications. A new psychology teaching team is dealing effectively with issues that have affected outcomes in the past and teaching and learning is now good. Students are acquiring good knowledge and developing a wide range of skills.
- Teaching and learning is well planned and structured to ensure the full engagement of all students and they understand the main theoretical concepts that underpin their subjects. Students are able to make good progress in a short time. Teachers use good quality resources to develop students’ skills and confidence.
- Use of technology to promote learning inside and outside of the classroom is under-developed in a minority of subjects. Teachers miss opportunities for students to use technology in lessons. Students comment that the virtual learning environment requires improvement, which would help their progress. A minority of classrooms have too many students in them for their size and this hinders learning as teachers struggle to get to all students when checking understanding.
- The large majority of students participate fully in lessons and benefit from the mostly good lessons where they make consistently good progress. Group work activities work well and teachers manage them effectively. Students often work together to research topics for themselves and evaluate results with their peers.
- Teaching is generally lively and challenging though occasionally teachers do talk too much causing a few students to lose interest. The best lessons challenge students of all abilities to develop their independent research skills to complete assignments for advanced level work. Teachers pass up openings to promote equality and diversity in lessons.

- Most teachers are well qualified and experienced and they use their experience well. The recent staffing changes have strengthened the psychology teaching team.
- Managers and staff provide a good enrichment programme. Visits have taken place by economics students to the Bank of England and politics students to the Houses of Parliament. Geography students have recently returned from Iceland where they studied issues about the 2010 ash cloud. Guest speakers visit from local universities and motivate students to consider application to higher education. The programme also promotes employability skills.
- Assessment and feedback are good and enable students to make good progress. In the majority of lessons, teachers use assessment frequently to check learning and enable students to progress through good questioning and review of skills development. Teachers vary the depth and challenge of their questions well and construct them to meet the abilities of students. Assessment and feedback of written work is good, particularly the use of cover sheets in sociology and psychology.
- Attendance and punctuality are good which enables the majority of students to make good progress in their lessons. Staff chase up absence promptly. Students are well motivated and speak positively about their learning.
- Staff set students challenging targets, which use an assessment of previous qualifications. They regularly review them and with the support from individual learning plans challenge students to make good progress. Students understand the progress they are making and are motivated to improve.

Modern Foreign Languages

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as are success rates achieved on A2 and GCSE courses. Success rates at AS have been inconsistent, but managers and teachers have taken action to resolve underperformance through closer monitoring of progress and ensuring students are on the right courses.
- Teachers plan lessons, which are challenging, varied and fun. As a result, students learning all four languages on offer are making good progress in their ability to speak and write spontaneously, accurately and at length, and to read and understand a good range of text. In a very small minority of lessons, teachers and students speak too much English, the pace is slow and work is not adapted to students' varying abilities.
- Students develop good employability skills, helped by collaborative work in class and excellent enrichment opportunities in all four languages. Exchange trips and visits promote good practical language skills, as well as independence, confidence, problem solving, teamwork and the ability to get on with people from different cultures. Students pursue related interests outside the classroom, taking up good opportunities for film and theatre trips and links with pen friends as well as independent study.
- Support for speaking and listening is good. All students have short, weekly small group sessions to develop conversation skills. Imaginative planning of these sessions supports class work, and each learner receives helpful individual feedback. The teaching of vocabulary is a particular strength in this department, for which the languages team have developed imaginative materials such as board games.
- The department is well resourced and learning takes place in a welcoming, specialist environment. Staff and students make good use of the library, language laboratory and interactive whiteboards. Students extend their learning through regular use of the college virtual learning environment to access audio and video files and interactive grammar exercises.

- Students know what grades they are aiming for and what they need to do to achieve them. Appropriate systems are in place to monitor progress, and staff are generous with their time in providing extra support. However, previously systems have not been sharp enough in a minority of cases to identify and support students at risk of failure: managers and staff have resolved this issue.
- Assessment of learning is good. Work is marked carefully and regularly, and usually returned promptly with pointers for improvement. Students understand examination requirements from an early stage, and learn to review their own work. Teachers use a range of strategies to check learning. Students say their teachers 'sense' when they are confused, and offer extra individual support.
- Learning another language is also helping students to widen their English vocabulary and develop their writing skills, with better understanding of accuracy and appropriate style. This is through the useful crash course on English grammar which starts the AS programme as well as study of contemporary issues, film and literature and the discipline of translation work. Latin is a popular enrichment course, which extends students' understanding of English vocabulary and grammar as well as broadening their general knowledge.
- Initial assessment and induction procedures prepare students well for their language programmes. A good number continue their language study at university, and all expect to use their language skills in their future for work and leisure. Students develop a good understanding of equality and diversity, of different cultures and of the wider world through their language learning. They say that work on social exclusion and discrimination has helped them to question and develop their own views.

<p>Business Studies</p> <p>Learning programmes for 16-18</p> <p>Learning programmes for 19+</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are successful in securing good outcomes for students. Overall success rates are above the national average. Retention on some two-year BTEC courses is below average. In the majority of business studies AS and A2 subjects, the number of students passing with high grades is above average this year.
- Teachers are well qualified and have up-to-date subject knowledge. They are confident and their enthusiastic delivery motivates students. Students enjoy their studies, have good attitudes to learning and work productively in lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good and are particularly successful in developing students' analytical and evaluative skills. For example, in an A2 law lesson students worked very well during paired work demonstrating high-level interpretation of the law when discussing and applying the defence of voluntary intoxication. Very effective accounting workbooks have a good range of exercises and activities that effectively develop students' knowledge and application of accounting principles.
- The majority of lessons are well planned, structured and purposeful with a challenging range of activities to involve fully students in learning. This results in most students making good and accelerated progress in their learning. In a BTEC business diploma lesson, students displayed good independent learning skills by analysing potential target markets for chocolate bars and presenting their findings to the class.
- In a few BTEC lessons, students do not make enough progress where activities do not meet their learning needs. In these lessons, a minority of students can struggle to keep up with the pace of the lesson and stretch and challenge for other students is insufficient. In lessons where

teachers spend too much time on long explanations of theory and general discussion, a minority of students lose concentration and become distracted.

- Teachers' use of questioning is sometimes not sufficiently precise or planned to involve all students in learning. In these cases, the use of directed or open questions is not enough to engage students by encouraging them to discuss questions together and develop their thinking skills.
- Teachers make good use of technology such as video clips to engage students and promote learning. However, opportunities are insufficient for students to use technology in lessons to stimulate and enhance their learning.
- Marking is of a high standard and clearly shows students what they need to do to improve their work to the next grade. Marked work is consistent in correcting spelling and punctuation and improving the layout and structure of written work. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning by marking their own and other students' work and setting their own improvement targets.
- The development of students' knowledge of subject technical language is effective. For example, by completing gapped handouts at the end of topics to reinforce knowledge and understanding. The additional social and personal development unit that BTEC business students take is effective in improving students' functional literacy and numeracy, and wider work skills such as team working to improve their employability.
- Teachers provide effective individual academic support to students and this helps them achieve their target grades. Initial advice and guidance ensures that students are on the appropriate courses. Students like the taster teaching sessions, which allows them to make informed choices of which courses to study. The college's compact agreement with the University of Worcester helps transition of BTEC students who meet the entry requirements on their courses.
- Students' understanding of equality and diversity is developed and reinforced effectively through teaching and learning. A weekly one-hour discussion and debate group covers topical issues such as 'should the International Development budget be protected?' and 'How can we create a Big Society?' Students gain a very good understanding of discrimination by completing the interactive 'Who wants to be a millionaire' 15 questions on discrimination.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, managers and governors are committed to providing a high standard of education and strive for excellence. Managers at all levels have high expectations and seek to improve continuously. Their actions are improving teaching, learning and assessment overall and increasing success rates. However, the proportion of outstanding lessons is low and a few students on a minority of courses do not achieve to their full potential.
- Governors are very supportive of the college and contribute significantly to setting strategic direction. Governors know the college well and monitor its progress closely; academic performance monitoring is increasingly effective and governors have a good understanding of the performance of different subject areas. Governors have supported and encouraged senior managers to take robust action to improve underperforming courses including the use of capability procedures where appropriate.
- Management of staff performance has improved and managers continue to strengthen this area. Annual staff appraisal and setting of objectives contributes to improvements in teaching and learning and to students' outcomes. However, in a few instances, targets are not sufficiently specific and managers do not plan staff development activities to meet identified individual needs.

- Leaders and managers have significantly improved the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers now receive a formal observation that evaluates teaching and learning against set criteria. Lesson observation information provides a useful overview of the quality of teaching and learning and informs development activity. However, managers do not extensively share good practice between departments or across the college.
- Self-assessment is broadly accurate and identifies most key strengths and areas for improvement. The use of performance data is extensive to evaluate the quality of provision and managers are thorough in considering students' views. Resulting improvement plans appropriately address areas of underperformance although in a minority of cases, plans are insufficiently detailed or the targets set are insufficiently specific or challenging.
- Leaders and managers have appropriately revised the curriculum to meet better the needs and interests of students. The introduction of vocational and applied courses, including an increasing number at intermediate level, alongside academic provision in several curriculum areas meets local, regional and national requirements. A wide and varied enrichment programme improves students' enjoyment and contributes significantly to their personal and social development.
- The active promotion of equality and diversity is throughout the college during induction, in tutorials and through the curriculum. The effectiveness of promotion is variable in different subjects with students in a minority of areas developing greater knowledge and understanding of key issues than those in other areas. The college provides a friendly and harmonious environment where incidents of bullying, harassment or discrimination are rare and where students have confidence that any issues they report managers and staff will deal with swiftly.
- Managers effectively monitor the success rates of different groups of students and accurately identify any achievement gaps. Action plans target any identified underperformance for specific groups and the college has successfully narrowed achievement gaps between several groups of students. However, as managers recognise, the achievement gap between male and female students has not narrowed and remains too wide.
- Procedures for safeguarding students meet legislative requirements. Appropriate recruitment checks are completed and clear policies and procedures are in place, which staff and students understand well. Staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and provide good pastoral support for students. Close links with external agencies ensure good access to a range of specialist support, guidance and welfare services.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Worcester Sixth Form College									
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Outcomes for learners	2		2	3					
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2		2	2					
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2		2	2					

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	2
Social Sciences	2
Psychology	2
Modern foreign languages	2
Business Studies	2

Provider details

Provider name Worcester Sixth Form College	
Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,512
	Part-time: 256
Principal/CEO	Mr Michael Kitcatt
Date of previous inspection	January 2009
Website address	www.wsfc.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	N/A	N/A	59	0	1,450	40	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	0	10	80	24	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Worcester Warriors Rugby Football Club 							

Additional socio-economic information

Worcester Sixth Form College is located in the south-east of the city. The college serves a mixed catchment area that includes areas of affluence, but also areas of significant deprivation in the centre of the city. The prior attainment of students is around average for a sixth form college. The college attracts over half of its students aged 16 to 18 from five 11–16 partner schools, four in Worcester city and one in the rural area of Martley to the west. In 2011, 58.5% of 16 year-olds in Worcester achieved five or more GCSEs at A* to C, including mathematics and English, above the West Midlands rate and around the national rate. The proportion of adults who are economically active and those with NVQ qualifications at levels 2, 3 and 4 in Worcester is around the national rate and above the West Midlands rate. Some 7% of students aged 16 to 18 are from minority ethnic backgrounds, well above the Worcester population of 3%.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Anne Taylor HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

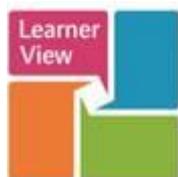
What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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