

City of Wolverhampton College

General further education college

Inspection dates		29 April–3 May 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-4
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This college requires improvement because:

- Learners' success rates remain below average at advanced level and work-based learners' success rates within the planned timescale are too low.
- Teachers' expectations of learners are often not high enough and they do not promote the development of learners' employability skills consistently in all subjects.
- Too little teaching is consistently good or better. Teaching and learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy has not improved and is inadequate.
- Learners do not consistently receive good quality written feedback on their work.
- Weaknesses in implementing action points for teachers' development arising out of lesson observations is slowing progress towards reducing the marked variations in the quality of teaching within and across subjects.
- Managers' analysis and evaluation of data and other performance indicators to inform concerted improvement actions are underdeveloped for some aspects of the college's work.

This college has the following strengths:

- High levels of morale amongst staff across the college and a strong commitment by all to bring about improvement.
- Some creative and inspiring teaching in a very few subjects.
- Good teaching, learning and assessment on work-based learning courses.
- A safe, inclusive and harmonious learning environment in which learners' views are regularly sought and acted upon to improve their learning experience.
- Good and productive engagement with employers.
- Strong leadership that has re-focused and clarified the central strategic direction towards equipping learners in and around Wolverhampton with the skills and knowledge to succeed.
- A strong and responsive management structure in which managers work with a clear purpose including towards financial sustainability, communicate transparently with staff and fully accept their accountability for learners' success.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Raise teachers' expectations of learners' standards of work, skills development and attitudes. Ensure they consistently seek to extend learners' knowledge and skills beyond the basic qualification requirements so that more learners make good or better progress. Set challenging targets for learners across all of the provision.
- Make sure that staff focus on developing learners' employability skills alongside their vocational skills so that learners are well prepared for future employment. Promote good attendance and punctuality vigorously.
- Support all staff and particularly teachers, to improve the quality of written feedback provided to learners including ensuring that spelling and grammar are consistently corrected.
- Promote the development of learners' English and mathematical skills by supporting teachers to maximise opportunities to encourage learners to use technical language confidently, develop their vocabulary and increase learners' application of mathematical skills in their vocational work. Support this work by reviewing and finalising the associated strategy so that the significant features and procedures are clear.
- Implement fully the planned revisions to the curriculum including reviewing entry requirements for intermediate level courses and ensuring that programmes of study are tailored appropriately to learners' needs and circumstances.
- Revise the approach to ensure a more systematic follow up on actions for improvement particularly to support teachers to improve their practice to be good or better and encourage them to use a wider range of teaching strategies to full effect.
- Raise the standard of teachers' planning for the exploration of equality and diversity themes in lessons in a vocational context and ensure they are better equipped to exploit opportunities for this development when they arise during lessons.
- Ensure that the detailed analysis of performance data for different groups of learners leads to precise and concerted actions to tackle the underachievement of specific groups of learners.
- Establish measurable targets for the new strategic plan to include the ongoing review of the curriculum, the improvement of outcomes for learners and the return to financial sustainability.
- Develop self-assessment so that the quality of work-based learning is evaluated thoroughly by subject and overall. Increase the robustness of evidence used as a basis for judgements in college-based subject areas and ensure that managers undertake rigorous evaluation to identify the root causes of underperformance and areas of good practice clearly.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Learners' achievement, particularly younger learners, improved in 2011/12 from a low base. More learners stayed on to complete their courses successfully although their success rates remain below average. Younger learners' success rates are close to average at foundation and intermediate level but are well below average at advanced level. Adult learners' success rates are below average at all levels of study, particularly so at advanced level.
- Two terms into the current year, learners' in-year retention rate is notably higher than at a similar point in the previous year and monitoring records show that most learners are likely to

pass their qualifications. Learners' attendance rate is increasing but is not yet good. Attendance is high in a few areas, such as sport, travel and tourism studies. Learners' punctuality varies and, for a few learners, is poor.

- Learners' prior attainment at the start of their courses is often lower than average and a significant proportion of learners come from areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation. Learners' progress compared to their starting points has improved, most current learners are making adequate progress and, in a few subjects, a minority of learners are making better than expected progress. However overall, too few learners achieve their full potential.
- Learners' work is mostly of at least a satisfactory standard. In a few subjects, such as engineering and visual arts, learners' work is good. However, because teachers' expectations are not high enough in a few subjects, such as in beauty therapy, sometimes learners' work barely meets qualification requirements and their employability skills are underdeveloped.
- Learners develop appropriate vocational skills. For example, catering learners produced a wide range of good quality bakery products for an open evening. Learners in visual arts use their creative skills well and engineering learners develop a comprehensive range of technical skills such as milling. In several subjects, advanced level learners learn to analyse and evaluate systematically and well but this is not widespread across all subjects.
- The success rates of learners from several minority ethnic groups improved in 2011/12 which closed the gap between their achievement and learners' average achievement level. However, younger learners of Pakistani heritage have declining success rates and a wide achievement gap with their peers is emerging. Female learners underperform compared to males, particularly younger females and including those on work-based learning courses.
- The large number of learners who receive additional learning support achieve at a higher rate than their peers. The relatively large numbers of looked after children who successfully complete their courses are increasing year on year. Learners develop their social and personal skills adequately.
- Pre-foundation level learners' achievement of functional skills qualifications is high but, while improving, achievement is average for learners at foundation and intermediate level. A large number of younger learners resit GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics and an average number are successful in achieving a pass. However, the percentage of learners who achieve A* to C grades has declined over the last three years and is low.
- The number of learners taking AS- and A-level qualifications has declined although success rates have increased. Learners' success rates for these qualifications remain below average. Learners make good progress at AS-level but more modest progress at A-level. Just under two-thirds of learners progressed from AS- to A-level study in 2012/13.
- The number of learners who progress through levels of study has increased slightly. A high percentage of learners move from pre-foundation to foundation level but only about a third of learners move on from foundation or intermediate levels into higher level study. Learners' destinations after completing their courses are recorded but evaluation of these data is underdeveloped and inconclusive.
- Apprentices' success rates vary by subject. Overall, rates are just below average but are high in engineering. Apprentices' progress has been too slow in almost all areas except engineering but current apprentices are making much quicker progress and more are achieving within the time allocated. Apprentices' standards of work are good and match the high standards expected within their workplaces. Learners studying NVQs in the workplace have high success rates but fewer than average complete their qualifications in the time allowed although their completion within the planned timescales is increasing in the current year.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving which is reflected in the marked increase in success rates in 2011/12. Teaching is good in a few subjects, however, too much teaching requires improvement with considerable variation in quality across subjects, as evident in learners' below average success rates and the differences in success between subject areas. Attendance at lessons varies considerably and, in a few subjects, learners' low or erratic attendance is detrimental to their learning.
- Most current learners, and groups of learners, are making satisfactory progress because most of the less effective teaching has been eliminated and support, advice and guidance are much improved. Learners on work-based learning courses benefit from mostly good training and individual coaching in good quality learning environments.
- The majority of teachers manage lessons effectively but their expectations of learners are often too low. Targets set during reviews and expected target grades are often insufficiently challenging to stretch learners' ability or extend their learning. Where teachers use targets well they are clear and measurable but too many targets are imprecise or are not time-bound.
- A majority of teachers integrate information and learning technology (ILT) into their lessons, but often they miss opportunities to make full use of this technology to enhance learning. Teachers are developing the use of the virtual learning environment well and they and learners use it increasingly effectively across subjects.
- Staff use their vocational experience appropriately to develop learners' skills and knowledge to a satisfactory level. Learners' starting points and prior abilities are suitably assessed and most are well matched to the correct course because advice and guidance is much more rigorous. Support staff are deployed productively to offer a range of support either in-class or on an individual basis when required, which is mostly very effective.
- For work-based learners, staff provide a full range of additional learning support which meets individual learners' needs well. For example, in off-the-job hairdressing theory lessons, support assistants work closely with teachers and have helped ensure that more current learners are completing their qualifications within the time allocated.
- Teachers' use of regular assessment in lessons varies in its impact on learning. A minority use skilful questioning to probe learners' understanding and check thoroughly that all learners have understood key points. However, teachers tend to use undirected questions more frequently and often allow a few learners to dominate in answering meaning that they do not always know how much learners have understood.
- Teachers use group work frequently and manage this well. For example, in motor vehicle practical workshops learners work together well in small groups to undertake complex practical tasks such as those linked to Ministry of Transport testing. However, in some group work, teachers focus too much on the progress of the group with insufficient awareness of the contributions and progress of individuals.
- Staff set learners appropriate coursework regularly but the quality of written feedback varies too much. Feedback is often insufficiently detailed or specific and errors in spelling and grammar are not consistently corrected. Teachers' verbal feedback is often much more effective.
- Staff review learners' progress regularly and formally every six weeks in specific review weeks. This approach is being used increasingly well to monitor learners' progress thoroughly as well as support them by providing timely opportunities to catch up with work. However, staff do not consistently tackle issues of erratic attendance or poor punctuality in reviews. Progress reviews in the workplace vary in effectiveness, mainly because staff do not involve employers sufficiently.
- Teachers approach to developing learners' English, mathematics and functional skills is underdeveloped. Teachers' focus on correcting spelling and grammatical errors consistently is

increasing. Teachers do not place enough emphasis on developing learners' use of technical language or helping them to apply mathematical skills in a vocational context.

- In a few subjects, staff do not provide learners with enough opportunities to undertake work experience or to go on educational visits.
- Teachers' promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. They do not systematically plan to integrate equality and diversity within lessons. Staff working with employment-based learners are only just starting to develop ways of promoting equality and diversity themes and most learners' knowledge and understanding is basic.
- The process for observing lessons has been reviewed to help with developing teachers' practice. A smaller team of observers has successfully identified teachers who need urgent support to improve and work is ongoing to help them become more effective. However, teachers' progress compared to the action points identified following observations is not rigorously monitored meaning that some teachers do not improve their practice quickly enough.

Health, social and child care

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement in order to increase success rates, which are below average on the majority of courses mainly due to low retention of learners. Current learners' retention is higher than in the previous year, particularly at foundation level, but is still low for learners on two-year courses. Most learners who complete their qualification pass but too few gain a higher grade.
- Learners make satisfactory progress in most lessons and a minority make good progress. Teachers often use their professional experience well to help learners develop the knowledge and skills needed for future employment. For example in a childcare lesson, the teacher guided learners skilfully to gain an excellent understanding of the factors that may affect them when observing children in a nursery or school setting. Learners often apply theory to practice well but teachers do not always make specific enough links to learners' work experience when explaining professional practice.
- Teachers foster a purposeful working atmosphere and, in the most effective lessons, teachers use topical and interesting materials; for example in health and social care, learners engaged in a lively debate about recent changes to the benefits system. Most teachers use questions to check learning adequately. Only a few teachers consistently extend learners' knowledge and understanding well through setting challenging tasks.
- Too often teachers set a slow pace and do not use resources or activities to maximise learning. They do not always pay sufficient attention to the checking of learning thoroughly in plenaries and their lesson objectives are not expressed clearly enough to allow learners to assess their own progress. Teachers do not use their knowledge of individual learners' starting points consistently to plan for their needs and interests.
- Staff provide very good personal support for vulnerable learners. Teachers know their learners well and give good support in lessons and assignment workshops. They work effectively with support staff to ensure that learners with additional learning needs learn well.
- Teachers monitor learners' progress carefully and deal with concerns promptly. Teachers have clear expectations for behaviour, attendance and timely completion of assignment work. They encourage learners to set realistic but motivating overall goals but shorter-term targets are often task-based, unchallenging and do not accelerate learners' progress.

- Teachers assess learners’ work fairly and promptly. They give learners clear indications of what they have done well but advice on what needs to be improved is often insufficiently detailed. Teachers highlight and correct grammatical and spelling errors consistently and pay good attention to correct referencing.
- Learners’ development of functional skills is satisfactory. Teachers infrequently incorporate mathematical skills well into vocational classes, for example by learners calculating the number of alcohol units consumed during an evening out. Teachers encourage learners to compile glossaries or explain unfamiliar words but fail to make learners more independent through strategies such as using a dictionary to check their own spelling.
- Information and guidance by staff are not always effective in ensuring learners are enrolled onto the most appropriate course or in preparing them for the demands of work experience. Learners who intend to progress to higher education receive effective support in choosing and applying for a university course. An increased focus by staff on highlighting employment opportunities in care has helped a few learners.
- Teachers’ promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory; they encourage tolerance and mutual respect but their approach to exploring equality and diversity issues is often too simplistic. However, learners often demonstrate a good understanding of what equality and diversity means in their practice such as the importance of avoiding gender stereotyping when planning children’s activities.

<p>Engineering and motor vehicle</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>Other work based learning</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Good teaching and assessment are confirmed by the high success rates of learners, including apprentices’ and other work-based learners and the timely completion of their courses. Staff link theory and practical learning well enabling learners to apply their technical and diagnostic skills very effectively to solve problems in the workplace such as in analysing and streamlining complex manufacturing processes.
- Teachers plan and provide off-the-job training well enabling apprentices to develop good theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Teachers make good use of a range of engaging activities to illustrate theoretical concepts and to help apprentices apply these to their workplace. For example in one lesson, engineering apprentices worked in groups to complete a varied and challenging carousel of experiments that enabled them to understand the concept of relative density particularly well. Teachers make good use of questions to check and develop learners’ knowledge and understanding.
- Training in the workplace is good. Workplace mentors provide good technical training for apprentices and help them to complete complex tasks successfully such as gearbox overhauls or producing milled pipework products early in their course. Often apprentices learn to complete tasks with minimal supervision quickly and to a high standard.
- Subcontracting partners provide highly effective training in business improvement techniques in which learners complete very good real life projects such as in the defence manufacturing industry. One large engineering business reported very significant cost savings and other business benefits as a result of its employees’ participation in the course.
- Assessors’ practice is good. They guide apprentices and workplace learners well to enable them to collect a robust range of evidence for their qualifications. Assessors’ expectations of learners’ portfolios are high and rigorously reinforced. Teachers assess apprentices’ off-the -job learning accurately and provide clear feedback to help correct errors. However, teachers provide too little guidance on what apprentices need to do to develop their skills to maximise their full potential.

- Staff monitor learners' progress well and help them achieve their qualifications within the time allocated. Teachers monitor learners' attendance closely and report absences to employers promptly, resulting in improved and high attendance at off-the-job training.
- Staff initially assess learners' mathematical and English skills and vocational aptitude thoroughly. However, teachers make insufficient use of initial assessment information to plan highly individualised learning activities resulting in a few learners not achieving their full potential. Staff provide insufficient written feedback on the standard of learners' work including their use of English and mathematics resulting in a minority of learners making insufficient improvement in these skills.
- Teachers provide good vocational support that helps learners to achieve such as extra time in practical workshops and additional support sessions. Staff provide additional learning support that is closely tailored to meet the needs of learners and is effective in helping them to progress well. Assessors are highly responsive to apprentices who request extra workplace visits.
- Staff provide good information, advice and guidance to ensure that learners select courses that meet their abilities, aspirations and their employers' needs. Teachers and assessors work closely with learners to prepare them for progression on completion of their courses.
- Teachers and assessors do not provide sufficient opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of equality and diversity beyond a basic level.

Information and communication technology

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement on the predominantly part-time workshop-based courses but is more effective on full-time class-based course. This is reflected in the high outcomes on a few courses but too much underperformance, particularly by adults, on part-time courses. As a result, combined with weaknesses in the provision of advice and guidance, too few part-time learners complete their courses.
- Teachers on full-time courses are particularly enthusiastic and inspire and motivate learners. They challenge learners and make them think about, for example, the advantages and disadvantages of a wide range of technologies. Learners develop good analytical skills as a result. Teachers use questioning very effectively and consistently to involve and challenge learners and check their understanding. Learners thrive on the challenge that teachers set.
- Teachers have high expectations of full-time learners and design tasks carefully. As a result, full-time learners produce a high standard of work and a minority is excellent. For example, intermediate level learners use simplified programming language confidently, which leads them to use procedural-based programming techniques at a high level.
- Teachers use technology well to help learners. For example, assignment briefs and feedback including improvement points for learners are accessible on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and often include short, helpful explanatory videos.
- One-to-one teaching in workshop sessions is supportive, encouraging learners and putting them at ease. Teachers' feedback to workshop learners is good, highlighting learners' achievements as well as areas for improvement. However, teachers provide part-time learners in workshop sessions with less support than full-time learners to help them remain or their course. Of current part-time learners about half have already left, in part because the course did not match their needs.
- Teachers set targets in workshop sessions that are too focussed on completing particular tasks and do not place sufficient emphasis on developing learners' skills. For example, a target to

require learners to complete work up to a certain workbook page rather than identifying exactly what skills need to be developed. Similarly, learners’ logs completed in each session mostly describe what has been done and not what has been learned.

- Advanced level full-time learners benefit from well-organised short work placements to link their learning to industry requirements. Intermediate learners complete a project for a local employer, from design to implementation, with very close contact with the client. For example, one group of learners designed and implemented a data base for a boarding kennel. Teachers improve learners’ skills in English and mathematics adequately.
- Teachers monitor full-time learners’ progress well. Learners monitor their own progress using the VLE remotely. Teachers’ use of systems to monitor the progress of adult workshop-based learners in the information technology workshop is adequate.
- Learning support assistants provide good support for full-time learners particularly at foundation level. This is very effective in helping learners to complete their work and remain on the course. In addition, teachers offer additional workshops where learners are able to receive extra help.
- Staff provide helpful initial advice and guidance for learners on full-time courses, most of whom are on an appropriate course relative to their ability and need. However, part-time adult learners receive too little information, advice and guidance when they start and are frequently enrolled on courses which are too long for their needs.
- Teachers use initial assessment well to inform the planning of full-time learning, but much less so on workshop-based provision. Teachers use detailed profiles of full-time learners to tailor lessons to meet their needs, for example, by pairing weaker and stronger learners in group work.
- Teachers’ promotion of equality and diversity is not strong enough. Teachers are being supported well to embed equality and diversity themes into their lessons but the impact on developing learners’ understanding is too variable.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Learning programmes for 16-18
Learning programmes for 19+

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate because learners are not developing their skills enough or being prepared sufficiently for employment, particularly in beauty therapy. This is evident in below average success rates including low levels of retention, even for current learners. Learners’ attendance is often irregular, they frequently arrive late to lessons and many leave before completing their qualifications. Learners do not develop important commercial awareness and employability skills and few learners progress to the next level of study.
- In the minority of more effective lessons, hairdressing learners work on a diverse range of clients or undertake meaningful activities that help to improve their practical abilities. Teachers skilfully and regularly use questions to check and extend learning and to encourage learners to think independently. Learners quickly become more confident, try hard and are willing to work things out rather than waiting to be told what to do.
- Too many learners are insufficiently aware of employers’ requirements such as retailing of products and ensuring return custom because teachers’ expectations of them are too low. For example, in beauty therapy lessons learners take too long to set up their workstations, run over acceptable treatment times and miss opportunities to promote products and services to clients. Teachers do not always set or reinforce commercially acceptable timings for services and opportunities for work placements in salons are too limited.

- Teachers do not demand high enough standards of learners’ work. In particular, learners’ application of nail extensions and nail painting, basic cuts and waxing are not always up to an acceptable standard. Teachers often tolerate learners’ lack of professionalism such as when a few grumble about taking on clients for treatments or do not keep their working areas tidy.
- Most teachers check learning regularly during lessons and assess learners’ work at appropriate times. However, teachers do not always check that learners have understood what they have been shown during individual demonstrations. Teachers often give motivating praise and useful suggestions for improvements. Learners have a basic understanding of what they need to do to complete qualification units because teachers review and update their assessment records regularly.
- Specialist equipment and accommodation including commercial salons and a spa reflects industry standards well. Learners benefit from plentiful products and equipment. Teachers give health and safety high priority which learners replicate. Teachers use technology effectively to display images, play music and videos.
- Learners now receive regular and helpful one to one tutorials and six weekly progress reviews with vocational teachers because of recent changes to provision of support. Learners find these useful to evaluate their progress and manage their course work independently. However, the impact of teachers’ work is not evident in improvements in punctuality and attendance.
- Staff make insufficient use of the results of diagnostic assessment. Results are not followed up by a more detailed plan of how learners’ identified needs will be met or how teachers’ activities will be adapted. Pre-course advice and guidance provided by staff does not always ensure that learners understand the demands and nature of the course work, particularly less motivated learners.
- Teachers actively promote the development of English well. Many teachers regularly and carefully check and correct learners’ written work. Functional skills and vocational teachers jointly plan assessments such as for a health and safety at work unit in order to engage learners more fully.
- Teachers’ promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Learners benefit from being able to practise on a diverse range of clients and, in a very few lessons, teachers develop their knowledge of equality and diversity. For example, in hairdressing a teacher developed a diversity theme by using two European languages and sign language to introduce a task. However, most learners’ knowledge of equality and diversity is basic and most teachers’ activities to expand on their knowledge are inadequate.

Sports, travel and tourism studies	
Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+	Good

- Good teaching supported well by thorough assessment is ensuring most current learners are making good progress, although a very few are not challenged enough to achieve their full potential. This position is not reflected in learners’ success rates which were mostly below average in 2011/12, mainly due to low retention rates. Learners’ retention and attendance have increased markedly in the current year.
- Learners enjoy lessons and learn quickly and effectively because teachers’ practice has improved and they have strongly supportive relationships with learners. Learners’ attendance is good and their behaviour is very good.
- Teachers plan and manage most lessons well, ensuring learners’ engagement and interest through a variety of interesting tasks and activities. Teachers use directed questions to check learners’ understanding of the subject matter effectively and thoroughly. Teachers inspire

learners to be enthusiastic about their subject and most emulate their teachers' high expectations. Teachers are well qualified and maintain their subject knowledge well through regular professional development.

- In a minority of less effective lessons, teachers do not always extend the ability and knowledge of the most able learners adequately. In these lessons, teachers do not develop learners' self-evaluation and critical analysis skills to enable them to achieve higher-level skills more rapidly.
- Teachers do not always use information and learning technology well and imaginatively to support learning. Learners use the virtual learning environment widely to support their coursework as well as to keep track of their own progress through their e-learning plans. However, teachers' targets in these plans are not consistently specific or measurable nor are targets aspirational in encouraging learners to maximise their potential.
- Teachers' good use of assessment includes providing learners with very detailed feedback including how to improve their work. Teachers use a wide range of assessment methods well which help learners to gain feedback on development of their skills including in coaching, customer service and leadership. Teachers encourage constructive use of peer assessment, for example, following learners' leadership of peer groups undertaking circuit training sessions.
- Staff support learners very well including in the development of their personal and employment skills. They provide additional learning support promptly. Learners receive good guidance, they have a clear understanding of progression opportunities and a large majority progress to higher levels of study. Teachers have improved initial information, advice and induction well so that more learners settle in quickly on the right course.
- Teachers use good quality resources to enhance learning. Sports learners have access to a well-equipped gym, hard surface area and a well-maintained sports hall in which they organise Olympic- and Paralympic-style events. Travel and tourism learners have access to an on-site high street travel agency in which they develop their customer service skills.
- The development of learners' English, mathematics and functional skills is mostly good. Teachers correct grammar and spelling errors, however, the quality of feedback provided to learners subsequently is inconsistent and some is not helpful enough.
- Teachers' promotion of equality and diversity varies too much. Their schemes of work refer to awareness and themes but teachers miss opportunities to promote and reinforce equality and diversity in lessons too often. For example, in a travel destinations session, an opportunity for learners to consider cultural differences of visitors to the United Kingdom was not developed.

Visual and performing arts

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and assessment varies too much which is reflected in learners' varying outcomes. Success rates on several courses have increased but rates on the majority of courses are below average. In the current year, more learners are correctly placed on courses at the right level. Consequently, more are making good progress and staying on to complete their courses, compared to a similar time last year.
- Teachers are well qualified with extensive vocational expertise. A minority of teaching is consistently good and promoting good progress. A small amount of outstanding teaching exists. The most effective lessons are lively with good questioning to check understanding and develop learning. Teachers plan well and use a range of activities to engage learners. For example, in a performing arts class learners had to 'speed date' with each other while retaining their performance characters.

- In the less effective lessons, teachers set a slow pace and pay too little attention to the extent of learning. Teachers rely too much on verbal explanations and use a narrow range of activities which do not capture learners’ interests sufficiently. However, teachers use assessment well with clear verbal and detailed written feedback enabling learners to improve. Teachers promote peer assessment well, such as in a dance class, where learners peer-assessed their work in choreographing different responses to a popular song.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge learners but are starting to demand more of them. Current learners’ work is generally good. Learners enjoy gaining technical skills and experimenting with materials such as drawing images for a cylindrical optical toy in an illustration class to demonstrate movement. Learners’ sketchbooks are frequently full of research work often based on unusual themes chosen by the learners, such as the American slave trade or decaying buildings.
- Teachers design assignments well and their clear text gives learners guidance on how to develop their ideas and improve their grades. Teachers are approachable and encouraging and this fosters good working relationships with their learners. They know their learners well, are sensitive to their needs and put support in place quickly where needed. Teachers ensure that learners have an appropriate knowledge of safe working practices in studios.
- Staff have recently introduced various initiatives to promote learning and help learners stay on track. Staff use a centralised monitoring system and make regular and detailed reviews of learners’ work which has been instrumental in increasing retention of current learners. Staff set helpful targets in progress reviews which learners find beneficial.
- Staff have improved initial assessment and guidance significantly. They ensure that entry to courses is by ability using improved interview and selection procedures and they make sure that learners are on the right course. Learners’ attendance is good. Learners receive good advice on their career aims, for example, outside speakers give good advice on career progression and help raise learners’ aspirations.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well by teachers through activities and assignments. The curriculum is inclusive and all learners participate fully with good peer support. Learners enjoy varied educational visits, such as to Florence, to extend their knowledge. Teachers use references to other cultures such as Egyptian and North American Indians and learners’ course work and sketchbooks often illustrate diversity well.

<p>Foundation English</p> <p>Learning programmes for 16-18</p> <p>Learning programmes for 19+</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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- Teaching is improving and a majority of lessons include good features. However, the use of assessment to promote and support learning requires improvement which means that learners do not always gain the grades they are capable of. This is reflected in learners’ success rates which are mostly average. Not enough learners gain grades A* to C in GCSE English, even when they are resitting this qualification.
- Teachers are appropriately qualified and know their learners well. The majority of teachers use their knowledge of learners’ individual skills and abilities to plan sessions that are lively and engaging. They use questions effectively to check learning and to challenge learners as well as a range of effective strategies. For example, teachers use acronyms and mnemonics to reinforce learning of aims, layout, tone and other features of published writing for GCSE learners.
- Teaching is not consistently effective and a minority of lessons are dull and fail to motivate learners. In these lessons, teachers do not personalise their strategies to meet individual needs sufficiently and learners’ progress is, at best, satisfactory.

- Learners mostly participate well in classes. In particular, they develop their practical application of English, such as in speaking, reading and listening to a range of different contexts. Teachers encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning and help develop their confidence, for example, in asking teachers to clarify the meaning of words or to explain the use of language. Learners make good use of dictionaries to extend the range of their vocabulary.
- Teachers’ use of information and learning technology (ILT) to promote learning requires improvement. Too few teachers use ILT resources to stimulate and enrich learning. Teachers’ use of interactive whiteboards, mobile technologies, video clips or other computerised resources is underdeveloped.
- During lessons, teachers provide accurate feedback to learners about their work and monitor their progress effectively. They encourage learners to use self-assessment, for example, by using proofreading skills to check for errors in writing.
- Teachers assess learners’ starting points appropriately through diagnostic testing and the use of free-writing assessments. However, teachers do not consistently link this information to planning for individual learning. Although targets on a few learners’ individual plans are very precise, more commonly teachers’ targets are too general to be helpful.
- Teachers’ written feedback on assessed work lacks rigour. Teachers overlook too many significant errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and other features of writing. Teachers are often too generous with their judgements that written work is good. As a result, too many learners are producing written work that lacks accuracy and fluency because of the number and nature of errors.
- Staff provide good support and care for learners. Teachers work productively with learning support assistants to provide effective support for learners who have additional needs including to support dyslexic learners or those with behavioural issues.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. Teachers use review weeks to provide helpful, tailored advice and guidance sessions for groups or for individual learners. Learners receive appropriate guidance about progression opportunities within the college.
- Teachers’ promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Too many good and naturally occurring opportunities to blend learning about equality and diversity with teaching of English skills are missed. As a result, learners’ knowledge of equality and diversity matters is basic.

<p>Business</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>Other work based learning</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Teaching and assessment have improved and are now good and current apprentices and other work-based learners are making good progress. However, this improved position is not yet mirrored in apprentices’ below average success rates or in the large numbers who do not complete their qualifications within the time allocated. Staff are supporting learners at risk of underachievement much more quickly than previously which has contributed significantly to their better progress.
- Staff help learners develop skills and knowledge which increase their effectiveness well at work. Employers provide good opportunities for learners to apply their recently gained knowledge and skills. For example, employers make good and immediate use of learners’ skills such as training in Value Added Tax. Staff have developed a flexible approach to training using day release or employment-based training which allows employers a choice to match their business needs.

- Staff provide good off-the-job training. Teachers engage and motivate learners and are particularly supportive when providing tuition based at employers' premises. Teachers encourage learners to develop independent learning skills and guide them to develop robust evidence of good quality work to demonstrate their understanding.
- Staff manage workplace training very well. They ensure that learners are clear about the learning aims, the component parts of their courses and the assessment requirements. Assessors use regular assessment and review meetings very effectively to support learners and they provide excellent oral feedback. However, in reviews staff tend to set targets that are too task focused and are undemanding in terms of extending learners' knowledge and skill.
- Assessors use their industry experience well to ensure that learning and assessment are relevant to business practices. They encourage learners to provide a wide range of evidence including audio recordings and photographs. However, information and communication technology (ICT) is not used widely enough to support learning and assessment which limits learners' opportunities to experience and become familiar with up-to-date technology.
- Staff use initial assessment of mathematics, English and ICT skills well to inform course choice and suitability for employment. Staff encourage learners to continue to a higher level of functional skills than required by their framework to improve their skill level. Learners have satisfactory individual learning plans but staff do not personalise these enough to ensure that individual potential is maximised.
- Staff inform employers regularly about their employees' progress. However, staff do not involve employers sufficiently in reviews with learners. As a result, staff do not always provide sufficient stretch and challenge for more able learners, particularly in terms of contributing to the value they add to the business.
- The provision of advice and guidance has improved and is good. Staff use a full range of available information to check that learners are enrolled onto an appropriate course. Apprentices have a good understanding of the course requirements before they start. Staff support learners in applying for jobs and practice interview techniques, which helps them secure employment.
- Teachers and assessors promote equality and diversity satisfactorily. Learners understand basic equality and diversity themes and increasingly have the opportunity to discuss topical issues that arise, such as gender equality. Assessors, using appropriate learning materials, have adequate discussions to develop underpinning knowledge. However, staff miss opportunities to support learners to apply this learning to their workplace.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The interim principal, with the support of governors, senior managers and staff has re-focused the strategic direction on meeting local and regional priorities using well-conceived strategic objectives. Senior managers place strong emphasis on strengthening relationships with employers, developing high-quality provision to support priority sectors in the local economy, and returning to financial sustainability. The new principal is leading on setting essential measurable targets to achieve this vision.
- Managers use mostly well-focused improvement plans to concentrate on critical issues and are using these well to bring about improvement. Improvement is evident in the higher proportion of retained learners compared to the previous year and the progress managers have made in eliminating most unsuccessful teaching. Leadership and accountabilities within the plan are clearly stated. Governors meet regularly to monitor senior managers' progress in implementing improvement plans, providing good support and challenge.
- Governance has been strengthened following the inadequate outcomes from the last inspection. Governors are well aware of learners' performance and the financial position, have more

confidence in the information they receive, and challenge it robustly. They have performed a key role in shaping the future strategic direction.

- Managers use performance management arrangements rigorously to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers value the wide range of good quality professional development they receive. However, the extent to which teaching has improved varies even within subjects and is slow in some. Managers' improvement actions have largely focused on ensuring teachers use basic teaching strategies methodically and tackling ineffective teaching. Not enough progress has taken place in establishing consistently good teaching across the majority of subjects.
- Self-assessment is evaluative and includes much improved analysis of performance data. However, very little evaluation of work-based learning takes place which undermines the potential for rapid improvement. In subject reports, managers' rigorous data analysis has enabled the clear identification of under-performing provision. However, critical analysis of advice and guidance and its link to ensuring learners are retained on the right course is less strong. Managers' evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and promotion of equality and diversity is lightweight.
- The interim principal's strong leadership has promoted cultural change to one of shared accountability for learners' success. He implemented a significant restructuring of staffing, which is ongoing, and instigated a comprehensive review of the curriculum both of which are contributing to transforming the college. Costs have been reduced markedly and the college is moving closer towards financial sustainability.
- Staff like managers' frequent and open communication and the transparency and honesty surrounding restructuring. They know what is expected of them and are keen to work together to share good practice and to resolve problems. Many of the managers in subject areas are new to their roles, but know their areas well and have begun to have an impact on improving the provision.
- The streamlining of the curriculum stems from sound principles, reflecting local demand and skills gaps in the local economy. Managers are cutting weak or uneconomic provision without reducing significantly the overall curriculum breadth. Entry requirements, progression routes and the strategy for developing English and mathematics have been reviewed although some work is still in progress to implement changes. Strong partnerships with a range of stakeholders underpin the curriculum. The interim principal has ensured stabilising and sensible withdrawal from a high proportion of subcontracts and most international work.
- Management of work-based provision is recently greatly strengthened with impact evident in better training and assessment. Quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive. Managers are starting to share good practice across vocational areas through the new centralised management structure.
- The centralised planning and promotion of equality and diversity are extensive and of good quality, better than that seen in lessons, where teachers' promotion is underdeveloped. Performance data by different groups are analysed to identify gaps in achievement, however, the wealth of analysis has not led to concerted action to reduce all achievement gaps effectively. The depth of evaluation of equality and diversity through self-assessment is insufficient.
- Managers listen to learners' views and makes good use of these to improve their experience at college. The college is a respectful, inclusive and harmonious learning environment, where learners feel safe and valued. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

City of Wolverhampton College

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	3
Early years and playwork	3
Engineering	2
Motor Vehicle	2
ICT for practitioners	3
ICT for users	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	4
Sport	2
Travel and tourism	2

Visual Arts	3
Performing arts	3
Foundation English	3
Business	2

Provider details

City of Wolverhampton College	
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 3,748
	Part-time: 12,881
Principals	John Hogg and Mark Robertson
Date of previous inspection	February 2012
Website address	www.wolvcoll.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	669	259	589	218	872	463	0	1
Part-time	435	1,523	352	2,578	122	1,314	6	299
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	446	373	86	240	1	2		
Number of learners aged 14-16	165							
Number of community learners	476							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In-Comm Training Services ■ Develop-U ■ Heatun Housing ■ 1st2Achieve ■ SAFE. 							

Additional socio-economic information

City of Wolverhampton College is based on seven sites including two large campuses and three smaller sites close to the city centre, a hairdressing academy in Worcester and a small site at Telford. Wolverhampton has high levels of social and economic deprivation as well as unemployment. Most learners come from Wolverhampton. The percentage of learners from a minority ethnic heritage is higher than in the local population. The curriculum includes courses from foundation to higher education level. Classroom-based courses are available in all subject areas and work-based courses in eight subject areas. The percentage of pupils who leave school with five or more GCSE qualifications at A* to C including English and mathematics in Wolverhampton is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Philippa Francis HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors 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 in the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the college. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above. Midway through the week of the inspection, the interim principal completed his tenure and the newly appointed principal took up his post.

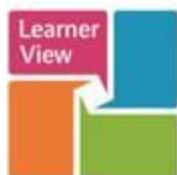
What inspection judgements mean

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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