

City of Wolverhampton College

General further education college

Inspection dates		20 – 24 October 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This college is good because:

- strong leadership and management and good governance have stabilised finances, raised standards and enabled governors and managers to plan more effectively for the future
- senior leaders have rapidly developed strong strategic links with the local enterprise partnership (LEP), the local council, community organisations and local and national employers; their response to meeting the local and regional economic and community development needs is outstanding
- managers and teachers have significantly improved teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection resulting in many more students making good progress, completing their study programme, achieving their qualifications and successfully progressing to further study, university or employment
- apprenticeships are of a high standard and are valued by employers
- students develop good personal, social and employability skills and benefit from good work experience opportunities which help prepare them well for employment
- the curriculum very effectively meets the needs of students, local employers and the regional community.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- outcomes remain low on a minority of AS- and A-level subjects, GCSE and functional skills mathematics and GCSE English
- the quality of provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy, foundation English and foundation mathematics requires improvement
- teachers' written feedback to students is not consistently good and does not always ensure that students have sufficient information to inform them how to progress and improve
- students have insufficient opportunities in lessons to extend their understanding of equality and diversity.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standard and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly on those areas that are not yet good and improve outcomes on courses that are not yet performing in line with national rates by sharing good practice from high-performing areas with those areas that are under-performing.
- Increase the quality of provision in English and mathematics by ensuring all teachers acquire the skills they need to promote and develop students' literacy and numeracy skills more effectively in lessons.
- Make sure that all students are clear about the progress they are making and how they can improve through ensuring teachers raise the standard and consistency of target setting and written feedback.
- Provide more opportunities in lessons for students to promote their understanding of equality and diversity.
- Develop further managers' use of data to help identify priorities for improvement by:
 - increasing the use of value-added data to establish better the level of students' progress relative to their starting points
 - the better monitoring and evaluation of progression data to assess students' progression to employment.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- City of Wolverhampton College operates from three large campuses across the city and provides education and training for approximately 11,000 learners each year. Around a quarter of students are aged 16 to 18 on full-time classroom-based study programmes, and around three quarters of students are adults. Approximately 800 learners are undertaking workplace apprenticeship programmes. The college offers a broad range of provision from entry- to higher-level in most subject areas. The significant majority of students undertake vocational and functional skills programmes, with a minority on academic GCSE and A-level programmes.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of classroom-based students who complete their programme and successfully achieve their qualifications has improved substantially and is now broadly in line with national rates. In 2013/14, students achieved particularly well in health, public services and care, engineering, ICT, media and communications. Performance in a minority of areas remains too low, particularly in hairdressing and beauty therapy, geography, economics, business and administration. The proportion of successful students on a minority of AS- and A-level courses has declined and it is too low. In contrast, for the larger number of students who undertake vocational programmes, primarily at levels 2 and 3, results have improved significantly and are now in line with national rates.
- Most adult students do not achieve quite as well as those aged 16 to 18. However, adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and achieve very well. Managers have successfully narrowed a gap in performance between students from different ethnic groups.
- The proportion of apprentices that successfully complete their training has risen significantly over the past three years and is now high, particularly for those who complete within the planned timescale. Managers have accurate and reliable processes to track and monitor the

progress of apprentices. They ensure that employers remain suitably informed about apprentices' progress, attendance and punctuality. Managers ensure that employers take an active role in the development of their apprentices, which helps ensure that apprentices make good progress and develop workplace skills of a high standard.

- GCSE and functional skills mathematics and GCSE English results are poor. Teachers do not always create sufficient opportunities in lessons to enable students on study programmes to develop their English and mathematics skills. However, inspectors observed good examples in subjects in the college, for example in engineering apprenticeships and construction for mathematics, and for English in science, mathematics and statistics, and administration apprenticeships. Managers have accurately identified this area as a key priority for development, but well-conceived improvement strategies are not yet having sufficient impact.
- Managers have recently introduced a broad range of initiatives to help increase attendance and improve punctuality. These initiatives are having a positive effect in many areas, but are not having sufficient impact in a few areas, including hairdressing and beauty therapy, foundation English and mathematics.
- Senior managers have only limited statistical data to enable them to assess and analyse the progress made by students relative to their starting points. The limited data indicate that the progress of most AS- and A-level students is broadly in line with other students relative to their starting points.
- Students make good progress in lessons and develop a suitable range of knowledge, skills and experience. Most teachers liaise with students to set clear targets, working with them to track and monitor progress and performance. Frequent review meetings enable teachers to provide targeted support to those students who are not progressing fast enough to help them achieve their goals.
- Students use the well-equipped workshop and teaching areas effectively to develop their vocational, practical and technical skills. Students undertaking study programmes use the very good opportunities with local employers for work experience placements to prepare particularly well for employment.
- Managers have been highly creative in their approach to helping prepare students for employment. They have rebranded tutorials as 'stretch and challenge' sessions, and refer to tutors as 'career coaches'. During these sessions, the career coaches work closely with students to help them develop their wider skills such as study and communication, job search, personal and social skills. Students emphasise how valuable they find these sessions that act as very good preparation for progression to further study, university or employment.
- A high proportion of students on programmes at level 1 and 2 successfully progress to further study or apprenticeships. Virtually all learners on apprenticeships progress to higher-level study or to employment. Many A-level students successfully progress to university. Too few students on AS levels progress on to the second year of A-levels. The college does not yet gather timely data on the progression of students on classroom-based courses to employment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Inspectors covered eight sector subject areas during this inspection. These areas provide a representative sample of the range of the college's provision by subject, level, prior performance and mode of study from across the college. During the inspection, inspectors visited lessons and other learning activities in most subject areas across the college.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the last inspection and these are now good. A significant number of lessons are now good or better and feature enthusiastic well-qualified teachers and hardworking students suitably equipped with skills that prepare them for

further work or study. Apprentices receive frequent timely and effective reviews, which help them make good progress and succeed within the planned timescale.

- Staff have much higher expectations of students than at the last inspection and challenge students to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding on their study programmes. For example, catering and bakery students worked very effectively as teams to ensure that food and baked goods were of a high standard and ready for lunchtime service. Their teachers supported them well so that they developed the confidence required to operate at a commercial standard and speed. These more challenging activities help increase students' confidence levels so that they become capable of working independently.
- Rigorous and effective initial assessment, combined with frequent tutorials, ensures that tutors and teachers know their students' strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers make good use of a new electronic tracking system to track progress and identify areas for development and improvement. Most students now have meaningful improvement targets that they set and review regularly with teachers. A few targets are still too imprecise and so students do not always know what they need to do to make best progress. The introduction of a team of staff who monitor closely students' attendance has improved attendance and reduced the number of students leaving their courses before the end. Attendance in most areas is now good, but a small minority of students occasionally arrive late for their lessons.
- A robust lesson observation process links closely to timely and purposeful staff development. This has made a significant contribution to the improvements in teaching and learning since the last inspection.
- Teachers plan lessons well. Managers encourage all teachers to use the cross-college '5 minute lesson plan' approach, which helps ensure clear and concise objectives for each lesson and keeps students on task. Staff also use the information from diagnostic assessments to prepare useful class profiles, which often help guide teaching and learning strategies. A small minority of teachers do not use this information well to plan students' learning activities.
- Most teachers devise good written and computer-based resources that enable students to work and learn independently. Students make good use of high-standard materials on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets to improve their learning.
- Students receive a high level of pastoral care and support from their teachers in lessons and from their tutors and career coaches. Learning support assistants' (LSAs) contribution in most lessons is good and their strong links with teachers help with the planning and presenting of lessons that meet students' individual needs.
- The frequency of assessment and quality of feedback on students' work have improved since the last inspection and these are now good. Verbal feedback to students is particularly good and most students receive helpful written feedback on their work. On a minority of courses, written feedback still requires improvement to ensure it helps students to make better progress with assignments. Teachers are improving their correction of spelling, grammar and punctuation, but a small number still do not consistently rectify these mistakes.
- The assessment of apprentices has improved significantly and it is particularly good. Employers are more involved in progress reviews so they have a greater understanding of how to provide better support to the apprentices. This helps ensure apprentices acquire relevant skills and knowledge in the workplace and make rapid progress.
- Students receive thorough information, advice and guidance from experienced and knowledgeable staff prior to starting at college. This helps ensure that tutors place most students on a suitable course. Personal tutors support students well to identify longer-term career aspirations. They provide good guidance to assist students in designing a suitable study programme to meet their individual needs. This ensures students gain relevant skills and qualifications and maximise their chances of achieving their goals.
- Since the last inspection, teachers have received significant training and support to help them develop their own skills in promoting the development of English and mathematics in lessons.

This initiative has started to have a positive impact and teachers have increased the opportunities in lessons for students to explore and develop these skills. However, not all teachers are giving this work sufficient priority in their lessons in order to ensure that students are developing these skills as rapidly as they could.

- This is an inclusive college with a culture of mutual respect between staff and students in lessons and more generally around the campus. Induction and course materials promote equality and diversity. A minority of teachers and assessors promote equality and diversity well in lessons. For example, in business administration students do activities promoting how to support customers from a wide variety of backgrounds. However, in too many lessons teachers do not create sufficient opportunities or miss naturally occurring opportunities to extend students' understanding of equality and diversity.

Health, social care and early years

16-19 study programmes 19+ learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, reflecting the marked increase in success rates on most study programmes. Students develop good personal, social and employability skills, and most successfully progress to higher levels of study or employment.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Staff provide detailed information and support at interview, on taster days and at induction. This helps students make an informed decision when choosing their course, builds their confidence, and helps prepare them well for college life.
- Initial assessment is thorough and ensures teachers identify possible barriers to learning, and provide suitable individualised support during students' study programmes. Teachers know their students well and help them to plan and develop personal and educational knowledge essential for working in care settings.
- Teachers have high expectations of students and develop learning programmes that meet individual needs and help promote students' self-confidence. Skilled and knowledgeable teachers motivate students to achieve high standards. They plan lesson activities well that stretch and challenge students and support them to make good progress. Teachers use innovative learning resources well, including information learning technology (ILT) to engage and motivate students in relevant and engaging activities.
- Staff invest a significant amount of time in helping prepare students well for work placements. For example, staff from the RAF carried out simulated interviews with care students during their first six weeks which enables them to prepare very well for interviews. Similarly, early years students gain valuable experience from working closely with the children of RAF families on their family funday.
- Teachers are well qualified, they have extensive occupational skills and act as good role models for students. Teachers undertake a broad range of relevant staff development activities, which help them to develop valuable new skills and knowledge that they use successfully to improve their teaching.
- Teachers help students develop their personal and social skills well. This has helped contribute to improved outcomes for students. Career coaches and learning support workers provide good pastoral and educational support to ensure that students successfully complete their courses and progress to the next stage.
- Students have detailed individualised learning plans that help them make good progress on their study programmes. Teachers set suitable targets for students in most lessons and carefully track

and monitor their progress. In a few lessons, teachers do not set sufficiently specific and measurable targets. As a result, students make slower progress in these lessons.

- Teachers work closely with students to establish suitable longer-term personal and career goals. Students then receive focused support, develop good personal and social skills and make good progress.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not leave sufficient time to check students have understood the topic fully. As a result, students do not always have sufficient reflection time to consolidate their learning.
- The support teachers provide to encourage students to develop their English and mathematics alongside their main study programme is not always good enough. Not all teachers systematically correct spelling and grammar in students' written work. As a result, students are slow to extend their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Students gain valuable experience and insight working on local community projects through fund raising and voluntary activities as part of their study programme. This helps raise their awareness of the diversity in their local community and builds their confidence in working with a wide range of different groups.
- Students demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding, both in lessons and on work placements.

Science, mathematics and statistics	
16-19 study programmes 19+ learning programmes	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in science, mathematics and statistics are good, reflecting the positive impact of a new leadership team in raising standards. Students achieve particularly well in physics and mathematics, and the significant majority of students from these areas successfully progress on to higher education.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use a broad range of activities and strategies to engage and motivate students and develop both theoretical and practical skills. For example, in an applied science lesson, students developed a good theoretical understanding of the structure and role of enzymes and then demonstrated good practical skills in determining the effect of temperature on enzyme activity. Teachers presently work at a brisk pace, which helps motivate students, maintains their attention and keeps them working purposefully and making good progress in lessons.
- In a minority of lessons, particularly in biology, teachers do not plan sufficiently well to engage students, or to ensure they make sufficient progress. Outcomes for students on AS- and A-level biology are particularly poor. Managers are aware of the problems in this area and are in the process of recruiting and training new staff to help raise the standard in this area.
- Teachers develop, reinforce and consolidate students' English and mathematics understanding and skills well in lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students explored the definition of a range of mathematical terms, symbols and equations; the teacher then encouraged students to develop their verbal communication skills by explaining their meanings to the rest of the group, then writing down their explanations.
- Teachers make good use of well-equipped laboratories and classrooms to support learning for both theoretical and practical work.
- Staff support and monitor student progress very well. Teachers encourage an independent approach to learning. For example, they ask students to identify and agree their own targets each week in discussion with the teachers who then monitor and review students' progress

regularly. These processes help teachers establish a climate of high expectations, autonomy and challenge.

- Teachers set regular and appropriate homework tasks for students and assess work promptly. Mathematics and physics teachers in particular provide valuable detailed and accurate feedback that ensures students know how to improve and make rapid progress. However, a minority of teachers do not provide sufficient detail in their written feedback to make it clear to students how they could improve, resulting in slower progress in these subjects.
- Teachers use ILT well to support and improve students’ learning. On-line resources and reference materials of a high standard are available to students through the VLE and students use these well to work autonomously and complete useful tasks outside lesson time.
- The quality of advice and guidance to applicants is good. Teachers carefully determine students’ prior knowledge and starting points and use this information well to place students on courses suited to their ability and aspirations. This helps minimise the number of students who leave their courses early.
- Staff provide a thorough induction programme that helps settle students into their studies. It also ensures students are suitably aware of health and safety concerns in classrooms and laboratories, know how to stay safe and how to obtain help if they need it.
- Teachers work closely with students as part of their study programme to develop the broader personal, social and employability skills they need to progress successfully. Students on vocational courses undertake valuable work placements during which they develop valuable work-related skills.
- Attendance and punctuality are good. Tutors monitor closely the attendance and punctuality of students and intervene to challenge and provide support if rates for these areas dip.
- Personal support for students is good. Tutors assist students in developing effective study skills and in planning their progression. The support, advice and guidance for those students applying to university are particularly strong.
- On completion of their study programmes most students progress well onto further study or university. However, progression rates from courses at AS-level to those at A-level are too low.
- Staff encourage a harmonious atmosphere of mutual respect in lessons. Students’ behaviour is good. Students feel safe. Most have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Tutors develop students' insight into equality well through a variety of informative activities and presentations as part of the tutorial programme.

Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	
Apprenticeships	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in engineering and manufacturing technologies for workplace learners, resulting in good outcomes for learners and high progression rates. Outcomes on apprenticeships have recently improved significantly and are high. Attendance of apprentices at college and their punctuality in lessons are good.
- Teachers are highly experienced, knowledgeable and use their technical skills well in lessons to motivate and inspire apprentices. They support and encourage apprentices well to produce high-standard engineering components in college and to maintain and operate complex machines safely and skilfully in the workplace. For example, a student in a plastics company worked well as part of a team to repair a manufacturing machine, to ensure the employer did not face penalty payments for the late delivery of components.

- Teachers and assessors have high expectations in the quality of work they receive from apprentices. All apprentices develop good personal and employability skills and improve their confidence and self-esteem.
- College workshops are suitably equipped with a range of modern industry-standard machine tools. Workshops are clean, light and well maintained, providing an industry-standard environment.
- In lessons, teachers regularly use a wide range of artefacts and video clips, which help engage learners and bring each topic to life. Assessors encourage apprentices, particularly at advanced level, to work independently. Apprentices regularly refer to an extensive range of valuable resources on the VLE to complete assignments outside lesson-time.
- Occasionally teachers set over ambitious objectives in lessons. In these situations, learners often do not complete all the lesson tasks and have to carry them forward to future lessons. This tends to slow learners' progress.
- Training and assessment in the workplace are of a particularly high standard. Apprentices and employers respect the significant experience of assessors. Employers and workplace assessors take a keen interest in the apprentices and work closely together to ensure that apprentices develop their confidence and skills, and make good progress.
- Assessors have high expectations of apprentices and encourage exacting standards of work. For example, in an aerospace museum, apprentices worked confidently to refurbish and rebuild vintage aircraft, some of which are the last remaining example of their type.
- Teachers and assessors provide good information, advice and guidance on apprenticeships. This ensures that apprentices and employers select courses that align closely to their needs and aspirations. Assessors use initial assessment very effectively to identify apprentices' starting points and to plan learning that meets individual needs.
- Assessors carefully and regularly track apprentices' progress and record this on tracking sheets displayed on workshop walls. Apprentices like this approach as it fosters a healthy competition between learners. Assessors intervene quickly and provide additional support if an apprentice is making slow progress.
- Apprentices receive thorough and accurate feedback on their progress, and guidance on how to continue improving their work. Assessors require apprentices to maintain detailed, organised and well-written evidence in their portfolios, reinforcing the high standards and expectations. Teachers do not always provide apprentices with enough clear guidance on how to spell words or correct grammar. Teachers use alternative assessment methods well to measure learners' progress, including workplace observations and witness testimony.
- Assessors are good at developing apprentices' mathematics skills, both in college and in the workplace. Apprentices interpret worked and scaled drawings well; they manipulate mathematical formulae confidently and work to high degrees of accuracy.
- College managers and staff have developed very strong relationships with employers, enabling all current apprentices to progress to an advanced apprenticeship and many to continue to higher education or directly into employment.
- Teachers promote equality, diversity and safeguarding well during induction and in lessons. However, teachers do not create sufficient opportunities to extend apprentices' insight into equality and diversity in lessons or in the workplace.

Building and Construction

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in building and construction are good. As a result, most students make good progress and most achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers have high expectations of students. They set challenging tasks, which help students develop good skills and knowledge and achieve their potential. For example, students in carpentry and joinery demonstrated to their peers how to set out and cut mortice and tenon joints.
- Teachers plan and provide interesting lesson activities well which help motivate and engage students. The pace of lessons is brisk which keeps students on task and enables them to learn and make rapid progress. In a small minority of lessons, teachers are slow to engage the less confident or to introduce extra activities to help the more able progress quickly and gain additional skills.
- Teachers make good use of spacious and well-equipped workshops and high-standard resources in lessons. Teachers also make good use of their industrial and commercial experience and make particularly effective links between the theoretical and practical elements of the course. Teachers often refer to workplace examples to make learning more meaningful. This helps increase students' insight into the more vocational elements of their course and helps improve their employability prospects.
- In practical lessons, students work with confidence, both independently and in small groups. This encourages them to develop good personal and team working skills. Students apply the good trade skills and understanding they have developed to produce work of a high standard. Teachers actively encourage students to use safe methods of working which helps prepare them very well for employment in the construction industry.
- Teachers create many valuable opportunities to develop students' mathematics skills. For example, students develop their numeracy skills by calculating the quantities and costs of materials for a building project, or by calculating circuit loads without calculators to improve their mental arithmetic skills. While most teachers correct spelling and grammatical errors in students' work, they do not always provide enough opportunities for students to improve their written and spoken English.
- In previous years, information, advice and guidance were not always effective at ensuring students were on the most appropriate course. As a result, retention rates have been too low. Managers have recently introduced a range of strategies to improve retention by identifying those students at risk of leaving early and providing them with extra support and guidance. These strategies are beginning to have a positive impact in reducing the number of students who leave their course early.
- Those students with additional learning needs receive particularly good support that enables them to participate and succeed at the same rate as others. Tutorial support is good and has a strong focus on supporting students to acquire vocational skills and knowledge, and maximise their chances of progressing into employment.
- Teachers assess work accurately and frequently. They provide encouraging and informative feedback to students and make constructive suggestions on how they might improve. This helps ensure students are fully aware of how well they are progressing.

- Most students develop good employability skills through valuable work experience placements as part of their study programmes. Students also take part in national competitions to improve their skills levels.
- Teachers create insufficient opportunities to promote, extend and develop students' understanding of equality and diversity in lessons.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly since the last inspection, but still require further improvement. The proportion of students who complete their course and successfully achieve their qualification has also improved, but it remains too low.
- Students at level 1 and 2 develop good practical skills, but those on programmes at level 3 make slow progress towards developing the full range of skills they will require to become commercially competent. For example, students did not ensure that clients' hair was smooth after blow-drying.
- Attendance rates are too low and too many students arrive late for lessons. This hampers students' progress and does not reflect the high professional standards that employers expect within the industry.
- Teachers do not create sufficient opportunities to develop students' English and mathematical skills in lessons. For example, students received too little help when trying to calculate ratios when mixing hair colour.
- Where learning is most successful teachers successfully plan activities that motivate and engage students. Students make good progress and develop their knowledge and skills well. For example in a beauty therapy lesson students successfully produced a variety of make-up designs for Halloween. This activity helped encourage their creativity and build their confidence. Where learning is less successful, the pace is too slow and teachers do not challenge students sufficiently. As a result, a significant proportion of students are disengaged from learning activities, they work slowly and make insufficient progress.
- All students attend a thorough selection process. This includes a detailed interview and appropriate skills test for manual dexterity. This assesses students' knowledge and skills, and ensures teachers gather the information they need to place them on the appropriate level to suit their development needs.
- Staff carry out good initial diagnostic assessment, which identifies students' additional support needs. Learning support assistants and tutors work with students early in their course to ensure they develop their confidence quickly and have the best opportunity to progress and succeed. Students particularly value the good pastoral support they receive from teachers. For example, tutors helped a mature student who was struggling to manage childcare and other personal issues to develop a support strategy and gain sufficient confidence to remain on programme and make good progress.
- All staff have suitable qualifications and appropriate professional and industrial experience. This helps generate a professional ethos in salons and classrooms, and enables students to develop a clear understanding of working in the industry.
- Teaching rooms and salons meet industry standards and provide a realistic working environment. However, some class sizes are too big for the salons and classrooms in which they take place. This restricts students' ability to develop their skills and hampers learning.

- Teachers assess students' work accurately. Assessment is frequent and fair. Students receive constructive and developmental verbal feedback following the completion of practical tasks. Written feedback on student assignments is constructively critical and supportive, and clearly indicates to students how to improve.
- Systems to track and monitor students' progress are good. Students and teachers jointly agree suitable targets and closely monitor progress. Students have good access to their targets electronically and track their own progress frequently. Progression rates to higher levels of study and to employment are good.
- All students and staff in the department work well together and treat each other with mutual respect. Students indicate that bullying and harassment do not occur. Students feel safe and know who to speak to if they have any concerns. While students are mostly aware of equality and diversity, teachers create too few opportunities to extend and develop students' understanding of the subjects in lessons.

Foundation English

16-19 study programmes
19+ learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation English require improvement. The extent to which students achieve their qualifications in English is too variable. In GCSE English the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C has declined and is significantly below rates nationally. In 2013/14 students' success rates in functional skills at levels 1 and 2 were substantially improved on previous years and were at or above national rates; at entry level they have declined over time and were below national rates. Attendance in lessons is too low, and below the college target.
- Teachers carry out good diagnostic assessment that provides them with comprehensive information about their students' abilities. However, teachers do not systematically use this information to inform their lesson planning and adapt activities for the full ability range of the group.
- Most teachers are enthusiastic and committed to helping students learn. They often plan lessons well, carefully checking students' prior learning and consolidating their understanding before moving on, enabling students to make good progress in these lessons. These teachers engage and motivate students by linking activities closely to their vocational studies. For example in science, students practised report writing, exploring science-related themes. Most students work well together, collaborating and supporting each other's learning.
- Where learning is less successful, teachers do not structure lesson activities well or communicate their expectations clearly to students. They do not design a suitable range of activities to cater for students' different ability levels. For example, teachers ask students to carry out several stages of a task at once, to highlight key points in a text and then edit the text with no intermediate checking. Less motivated students were unclear what to do, and made slow progress.
- Teachers often fail to engage less confident students. Where this is so, teachers let the more confident or the more vocal dominate, while others do not benefit fully from involvement in the discussions and activities. Teachers make good use of electronic devices in lessons to help students research and share ideas easily.
- Initial advice and guidance are good and ensure that teachers place students on the appropriate programme of study. Students receive accurate information about their study programmes before enrolment, and value the advice and guidance from teachers and career coaches.

- Teachers set meaningful targets and monitor students' progress carefully, actively involving students in the review process on most courses. However, a small minority of students studying at entry-level and level 1 are unsure of procedures to review their personal targets, they receive less support and as a result, they make slower progress.
- Teachers provide good verbal feedback to students in lessons. They mark written work thoroughly, correct grammar and spelling meticulously and give praise and advice that help students to improve and make progress.
- Staff promote a culture of mutual respect in lessons between students and with teachers. Students are friendly towards each other and work together well in lessons. Teachers of GCSE courses create good opportunities to increase students' awareness of equality and diversity, for instance by discussing attitudes to race and disability sensitively when working on a set text. However, teachers in other lessons create too few opportunities to broaden students' understanding of equality and diversity issues more widely.

Foundation mathematics

16-19 study programmes

19+ learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment on foundation mathematics require improvement. The proportion of students who successfully achieve their qualifications in functional skills and A* to C grades in GCSE mathematics is low, and significantly below national rates.
- Managers have recently completed a major re-structure in the department, recruiting and training teachers and introducing a new approach to the teaching of mathematics. These changes are starting to lead to improvements, but require more work to ensure teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good.
- Teachers have high expectations of most students and work hard to help them progress and achieve. Support in lessons is mostly good, from both learning support assistants and teachers. Staff are enthusiastic about their work within the new structure and promote the importance of functional skills within study programmes strongly.
- Teachers design lessons that are frequently lively and interesting. They make good use of visual and tactile learning activities, such as games, puzzles and quizzes, to help engage and motivate students, particularly on lower-level programmes.
- Teachers do not plan well enough for the broad ability range or cater adequately for the individual needs of all students. In most lessons where students are of mixed ability, all undertake the same activities that cater mostly for the lower-ability students. These students receive sufficient support to enable them to make good progress. However, the activities do not challenge enough the more able to maintain their interest successfully. As a result, they become disengaged and make slower progress.
- Teachers place too little emphasis on providing mathematics tuition in a vocational context. Schemes of work are mostly generic, but although teachers adapt these for each group of students, not all develop sufficient confidence or understanding of how they might apply mathematics in the workplace.
- Teachers do not consistently promote the development of students' speaking, listening and writing skills in mathematics lessons. Teachers place too little focus on students developing their use of technical language and spelling of mathematics terminology or on improving their communication skills through group discussion activities.

- Teachers make poor or inappropriate use of ILT in lessons. Teachers sometimes ask students to watch on-line video clips without explaining the learning objectives clearly to the students. In these lessons, students make slow progress.
- Staff provide good information advice and guidance to students at the beginning of the courses. They complete thorough diagnostic assessment of students when they start their study programmes to identify their prior attainment levels. They use this information well to place students on the most appropriate level of study. However, teachers, make too little use of this information to help plan learning activities to match the different developmental needs of all students. As a result, too few students make sufficient progress.
- Teachers give frequent positive and encouraging verbal feedback to students in lessons. Teachers' written feedback is also supportive and accurately identifies ways for students to improve, although teachers' handwriting is not always easy for students to read.
- Teachers make good use of individual learning plans to set and agree targets with students, and track and monitor their progress. Most students are clear of their targets and the progress they are making.
- In lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient occasions to improve students' understanding of equality and diversity. Managers' approach to safeguarding is very effective. Students feel safe around the college. Teachers generate an industrious and positive work ethic in lessons.

Administration

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment for business administration apprentices are good, reflecting the high numbers that successfully complete their apprenticeships, all of whom successfully progress to a higher-level apprenticeship or employment.
- Apprentices make good progress, both at college and in the workplace, where they develop their skills well. For example, apprentices confidently demonstrated their ability to prepare high-standard business letters and construct useful spreadsheets to manipulate data. Assessors help apprentices develop the confidence they require when meeting new clients, taking bookings and dealing with difficult situations in the workplace.
- Assessors have appropriate qualifications, a broad range of vocational skills and a good understanding of the workplace. They use these skills to motivate apprentices, and support them in developing good skills in the workplace.
- Apprentices prepare well for review meetings with their assessor. They produce a comprehensive range of good-quality evidence that clearly demonstrates they are meeting the standards for their qualification. Assessors actively encourage the more able intermediate apprentices to complete valuable additional higher-level qualifications. These extra qualifications help challenge and motivate apprentices, which helps increase their prospects of employment.
- Assessors maintain strong links with employers, who provide good support and guidance to apprentices within the workplace and play an active role in their development. However, not all employers are sufficiently involved in apprentices' reviews and this reduces the opportunities for apprentices to develop their role further in the workplace.
- Apprentices receive very good support from staff. Assessors use questioning well to check apprentices' understanding. They provide valuable flexible support to apprentices and monitor their progress closely. This helps ensure apprentices are aware of the progress they are making and helps support them to achieve in a timely manner. However, apprentices' attendance on day-release sessions is too low and it is below the target set by the college's managers and staff.

- Assessors effectively ensure apprentices develop the skills they need to be self-motivated and to manage their own learning in the workplace. Assessors accurately identify the apprentices' development needs when they start their course. They work with them to build an individual programme of learning which will meet their needs and maximise their chances of success.
- Assessors provide regular high-standard reviews and feedback to apprentices on their progress. They assess apprentices using tasks and evidence that are an integral part of the workplace. Assessors provide helpful verbal and written feedback that clearly indicates to apprentices how they can improve. In a minority of portfolios, apprentices' action plans do not always include measurable targets.
- Apprentices develop their communication skills well, both in written and spoken English, and in the use of appropriate technical business vocabulary. Assessors also ensure that apprentices gain the appropriate mathematical skills they require in the business environment.
- Staff provide good initial advice and guidance that places apprentices on the appropriate programme for their interests and abilities. The induction programme ensures apprentices are clear about the expectations of the course and their rights and responsibilities, and have the understanding they need to enable them to make good progress.
- At induction, staff raise apprentices' awareness of equality and diversity, but they do not find sufficient opportunities to promote and extend learners' understanding of equality and diversity during progress reviews.
- Learners have high levels of respect for staff and other students. In the workplace, learners are aware of the importance of treating all customers fairly. Learners feel safe and understand how to recognise and report bullying, harassment and unfair treatment.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Governors, the Principal and the executive management team provide strong leadership. They manage change well; they implemented skilfully a clear strategy for improving teaching, learning and assessment, and raising standards. This is having a significant impact on improving students' progress and achievement.
- Leaders and managers have a strong sense of purpose and are determined to raise standards. Managers and staff clearly understand the college's strategic focus. They are very ambitious for the continued growth and development of the college. They recognise they have to do further work to establish an outstanding college and they have clear aspirations to achieve this status.
- The engagement of leaders and managers with the LEP, the local council and the community is very strong. The college's strategic priorities align very closely with those of the LEP. The response of leaders and managers to local and regional economic and community needs is outstanding.
- Managers and staff collaborate particularly well with employers and they are extremely responsive to their needs. For example, managers are currently expanding the apprenticeship programme and developing training contracts with key employers. This is helping to bring jobs and investment into the area and to provide a better skilled workforce across the region. Local employers value the work of college staff and the leadership team in developing the knowledge and skills of the region's workforce.
- Most students on study programmes have good access to work experience, which enables them to develop their skills and prepare well for future employment. The college's sizeable Prince's Trust programme successfully creates good training opportunities and progression routes for many unemployed young people.

- Staff development and the support it provides to help improve teaching and learning is good. It is having a positive impact on raising standards across the college. Leaders, managers and staff set high expectations for most students and work well together to meet them.
- Self-assessment and quality improvement planning are thorough, but these arrangements have not managed to raise standards in all areas. The quality of provision in a minority of subject areas is not good enough, particularly in hairdressing and beauty therapy, foundation English and mathematics, and on a minority of AS- and A-level courses. Governors, managers and staff recognise these areas for improvement and they have taken action to tackle them.
- Managers use accurate and reliable data well as part of the quality review and improvement process. However, they do not make best use of data to evaluate students' progress relative to their starting point. In addition, they do not have access to timely data on the proportion of students who progress from the college to employment. As a result, they are not able to use this information to help identify quality improvement priorities.
- Governance at the college is good and supports the work of the executive team. The board receives accurate, detailed information that enables them to provide good support and challenge on financial management, quality improvement and performance. The board has recently recruited additional board members, which has broadened the expertise of its members and strengthened community and business links, particularly with the LEP. Arrangements to meet statutory duties are systematic and records are comprehensive.
- The strengthening of the board of governors and positive actions from senior managers ensure the college is now in a more stable financial position, has an improved reputation and performance, and is capable of continued strategic development and quality improvement.
- The college is a safe environment for students who show through their behaviour mutual respect for both staff and their peers. The college has an inclusive and harmonious setting for learning in which students make good progress regardless of their background. The promotion of equality and diversity across the college is mostly good. Clear policies and supporting practices protect students from bullying and harassment.
- Safeguarding arrangements across the college are good, managed well and have some outstanding features. Students feel very safe and know how to raise concerns in the very rare event that they should experience bullying or discrimination. Support for students, for example on personal and financial issues, is very good. The college meets fully its statutory responsibility in relation to safeguarding. All staff within the college have received training on safeguarding, including training specifically to protect students from radicalisation. Staff are able to identify quickly any students, or groups of students who are at risk. Support for these students is good. Staff promote health and safety in classrooms and workshops effectively in the vast majority of cases.

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	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2			2		2	2		
Outcomes for learners	3			3		3	2		
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2			2		2	2		
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2			2		2	2		

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and Social Care	2
Early years and Playwork	2
Science	2
Mathematics and Statistics	2
Engineering	2
Manufacturing Technologies	2
Building and Construction	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Foundation English	3
Foundation mathematics	3
Administration	2

Provider details

Type of provider

General further education college

Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	9,569							
Principal/CEO	Mr Mark Robertson							
Date of previous inspection	April 2013							
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+
	618	979	555	1,342	769	865	0	54
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	303	181	83	97	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	22							
Number of employability learners	18							
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"> ▪ Chapters Hair Academy ▪ VIP Academy ▪ Developing Performance Partnership ▪ InComm Training Services ▪ JS Consultants. 							

Contextual information

City of Wolverhampton College is a general further education college based on three main campuses, and several smaller sites in and around Wolverhampton. The college serves the city, with around 250,000 residents, and the Black Country with around a million residents.

Wolverhampton and the Black Country have high levels of social and economic deprivation and high unemployment. The sectors with highest unemployment include manufacturing, health and business services. Around 35% of the city's residents are from a minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of students who leave school with five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C, including English and mathematics is below the national rate.

In February 2012, Ofsted inspected the college and found it to be inadequate. The college had another full inspection in April 2013 at which inspectors graded the overall effectiveness of the college as requiring improvement. The current Principal took up post in May 2013.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Peter Nelson HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight 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 students' 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 relevant provision at the college. 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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