



North East Worcestershire College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: North East Worcestershire College

Type of college: General Further Education

Principal: Neil Bromley

Address of college: Peakman Street, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 8DW

Telephone number: 01527 570020

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Chair of governors: Virginia George

Unique reference number: 130713

Name of lead inspector: Kathleen March, ALI

Dates of inspection: 8 - 12 May 2006

Background of the organisation

1. North East Worcestershire College operates on two main sites in Redditch and Bromsgrove, some nine miles apart and in approximately 50 community venues. Over 58% of learners live in Redditch, 21% live in the Bromsgrove area, 7% in Birmingham and 14% in bordering areas within Worcestershire and the West Midlands conurbation. 64% of full-time learners study at Redditch and 36% at Bromsgrove. The college's mission is 'to provide high quality and flexible learning opportunities throughout the whole of the community, to promote independence, the development of skills and employability'.
2. Redditch borough has an urban area in the north inhabited by over 90% of the population and a more rural area lying to the south east. Bromsgrove district is a mixture of rural and urban areas, with the main centre of population at Bromsgrove. The north of Worcestershire has traditionally relied heavily on the West Midlands manufacturing sector, particularly the automotive industry, for its employment base, and experienced the impact of significant job losses in the motor vehicle industry.
3. The college has increased in size since the last inspection in 2002, with full-time learner numbers, higher education and community-based provision increasing. In 2004-2005, learner numbers were 17,089 aged 19 plus and 1,841 16 to 18 year olds. Some 60% of full-time equivalent learners are adults and 40% aged 16 to 18. The gender profile shows 60% of learners recorded as female and 40% male. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups exceeds that of the local area.
4. A high proportion of learners follow vocational courses, with an extensive range of full-time and part-time vocational courses offered from entry to degree level. Approximately 70% of learners are enrolled on level 1 and level 2 courses. The college has Centre of Vocational Excellence status for management and professional studies. The college manages apprenticeship programmes with 192 learners currently in hair, business administration, health and social care and engineering, including motor vehicle. Twenty four learners follow Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes. Around 500 learners aged 14 to 16 from local secondary schools follow vocational courses at the college.

Scope of the inspection

5. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- the overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
- achievements and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievements and standards	Outstanding: grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: grade 1

Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

6. Achievement and standards have improved significantly since the last inspection and are outstanding. Overall success rates are significantly improving. For 16 to 18 year olds and adults at levels 1 and 2, success rates are outstanding. Retention is significantly improving and achievement rates are very high. The standard of learners' work is very good. Appropriate action is now being taken to improve success rates on work-based learning programmes. Learners greatly enjoy their courses.
7. Teaching and learning are good. The college has a highly effective system for observing teaching and learning which is used well to identify areas for improvement and to support and develop teachers. The college has made significant improvements in teaching and learning. Assessment is good and learners are well informed about their progress on courses.
8. The college response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college's very extensive range of programmes meets the needs of individual learners, employers and local communities very well. The guidance and support provided for learners is outstanding and greatly contributes to improving retention rates. The achievement of minority groups is equal to or better than that of majority groups. All main buildings are completely accessible to learners with restricted mobility.
9. Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The principal and senior managers set an exceptionally clear strategic direction. Governance is excellent. Quality assurance systems are highly effective in securing improvements to learners' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning. The new college buildings provide an excellent learning environment. The promotion of equal opportunities is good.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

10. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and accurate. College managers and governors very effectively focus on securing improvements. Course and programme area reviews accurately identify key issues, strengths and actions for improvements. Quality assurance systems are rigorous and effective in improving provision. The overall quality of provision is outstanding. The observation of teaching and learning is comprehensive and linked closely to the college's staff development programme. Management information systems are robust and provide reliable data. The college's financial position is good and managers deploy physical and human resources very effectively.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

11. The college has taken outstanding steps to improve. Most key weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Retention rates on adult provision, which were previously identified as a weakness, are now high. Success rates have risen and are significantly above average. The re-organised management structure has led to significant improvements in communication and the management of cross college provision. The new college buildings provide an excellent learning environment. Work-based learning and key skills have been recognised as areas for further improvement and effective action has been taken.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- outstanding leadership and management
- excellent governance
- extensive and productive partnerships
- innovative and effective employer engagement
- outstanding success rates at level 1 and level 2
- much highly effective teaching and learning
- excellent approach to educational and social inclusion
- outstanding guidance and support
- very effective additional learning support
- very high quality learning environment
- rigorous self-assessment.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- success rates in work-based learning
- the achievement of key skills qualifications
- lateness in some classes.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

12. The college uses its self-assessment process effectively to support significant improvements in achievement and standards. Success rates have consistently improved at all levels over the three year period 2003 to 2005, from below the national averages, to significantly above. On long courses this represents an increase of 37 percentage points for 16 to 18 year olds and 17 percentage points for adults. Over 70% of college provision is at levels 1 and 2 and success rates on levels 1 and 2 long courses are outstanding. In 2004-2005, at level 1 they are over 30 percentage points above national averages for 16 to 18 year olds and over ten percentage points above for adults. At level 2, success rates are over 20 percentage points above national averages for 16 to 18 year olds and over ten per cent above for adults. Level 3 long courses have also significantly improved and are now around the national average. Success rates on short courses are very high for all learners.
13. Retention and achievement rates for 16 to 18 year olds are very high and have significantly improved. For adults, retention is improving and around the national average and achievement rates are very high. School pupils aged 14 to 16 studying for vocational qualifications at the college make good progress and progression rates to college courses are good. Adult learners on community programmes develop useful skills.
14. Success rates for advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships on work-based learning programmes are satisfactory overall, although the college recognises that progress and achievements are low in some of the vocational areas. Full framework achievements in hair and business administration significantly improved in 2004-2005. Positive outcomes on E2E are also improving. The number of learners following key skills qualifications was low, but this is significantly improving in 2005-2006. Learner attendance is satisfactory.
15. The standards of learners' work are very high, both in theory and practical work, and learners develop a good range of skills. A high percentage of work receives high grades in external qualifications. Learners on skills for life courses are able to apply their skills in their work and home lives usefully. Learners greatly enjoy their courses. Progression into higher education and employment is good.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

16. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very well planned and aims and objectives clearly and effectively conveyed to learners. Learners are actively involved in their lessons and teachers encourage collaborative working to successfully develop team-working skills. A very good range of stimulating activities is effectively used in the majority of lessons to extend learners' knowledge and understanding and teachers check learners' understanding by effective questioning. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and expertise. Most full-time and part-time staff are well qualified. Staff at all levels are enthusiastic about improving teaching and learning. The self-assessment report contains insufficient detailed information about the quality of teaching and learning.
17. In the majority of lessons, information learning technology (ILT) is used effectively. However, the college recognises that this is an area for further development. In a minority of lessons, learners are insufficiently challenged. There are examples of learners arriving late to classes and disrupting the start of lessons.
18. Assessment is well planned. Work is marked promptly. Written comments on marked work are very useful in guiding learners to where they have performed well and what they need to do to make further improvement. The college issues guidelines to support assessment across the provision, but also allows flexibility for the requirements of individual programmes. Work-based learners receive appropriate one-to-one support.
19. The use of electronic individual learning plans assists communication between teachers, to ensure that learners' progress is carefully and accurately tracked. However, this system is not yet fully embedded across the college and there is currently inconsistency in the quality of action planning to ensure that learners are making maximum progress.
20. Appropriate health and safety standards are maintained in college workshops and in the workplace. Suitable discussions about health and safety practice and equality of opportunity take place with work-based learners during reviews.
21. The college provides a very extensive range of programmes to meet the needs of individual learners, employers and local communities very well. Clear progression routes are in place for learners at all levels throughout the curriculum and there is an extensive range of enrichment activities.
22. The college's responsiveness to the needs of employers is outstanding. Some innovative and very effective work takes place with a significant number of employers, including bespoke training. The college was particularly successful in responding to the closure of a local manufacturer in 2005. Over 400 employees received a skills assessment and approximately 30% of these led to further learning and skills programmes.

23. The college collaborates very successfully with schools to help them widen their curriculum for 14 to 16 year olds, and schools speak highly of the way in which these courses enhance their learners' experience at Key Stage 4. Progression into courses at the next level is high. In 2004-2005, two in every three learners stayed on from the 14 to 16 programmes to study a full-time course at the college.
24. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The college's very extensive range of programmes meets the needs of individual learners, employers and local communities very well. The range of provision and the excellent support provided for learners has helped the college to widen participation successfully. The achievement of minority groups is equal to or better than that of majority groups. All buildings are completely accessible to learners with restricted mobility.
25. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Learners have easy access to comprehensive and impartial advice and guidance to help them choose the most appropriate course. The learning resource centres are very well equipped and provide an outstanding learning environment. Learners greatly value the good quality careers' advice and the visits and speakers which give a very clear insight into the world of work. The tutorial system is well organised and effective. Attendance is closely monitored. Support for part-time adult learners is effective.
26. The college identifies learners' specific needs early and collaborates very successfully with outside agencies to both diagnose needs and provide the required support. In-house dyslexia assessment has identified a significant number of learners who have not previously had their needs recognised. The college provides a very good range of support to learners promptly and effectively. Learners receiving support achieve at least as well as those who do not require it.
27. The college enables young people to learn about healthy living and helps them to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for employment. The key skills programme has been significantly revised and improved. Key skills are beginning to be integrated into the vocational programmes. However, there is currently insufficient success in the key skills qualifications of communication and number.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

28. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal and senior managers set an exceptionally clear strategic direction, focused strongly on high quality teaching and learning, effective support for learners and service to the local community. The principal provides inspiring and highly effective leadership. The management structure allows autonomy and accountability with very clear lines of communication between various levels of staff. Business

planning, self-assessment and the monitoring of standards are clearly aligned and firmly based on learners' needs and performance.

29. Governance is excellent. Governors are very well informed and fully supportive of the college's mission to raise standards. They challenge and support the principal and senior managers in order to secure improvements. Staff morale is high. Teachers and managers have the confidence to be self-critical and feel valued by the organisation.
30. Managers have been highly successful in securing consistent and significant improvements to learners' achievements at every level. In 2004-2005, adult learners and learners aged 16 to 18 achieved success rates significantly above national averages, particularly at levels 1 and 2.
31. Quality assurance systems are highly effective. The self-assessment report is rigorous and accurate. Detailed course reviews underpin the overall college self-assessment. However, some course reviews have too little evidence on teaching and learning and the development of learners' skills. Data and management information to support self-assessment and business planning are detailed, accurate and readily accessible. The college has recognised the weaknesses in the management of key skills and work-based learning and is taking appropriate action to improve the provision.
32. Lesson observation is comprehensive, rigorous and successful in securing improvements to teaching and learning. The judgements recorded in internal lesson observations are accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. There are clear and explicit links between lesson observation, appraisal and staff development. Staff training is extensive and effective in developing teaching, management and professional skills.
33. The learning environment provided by the college is outstanding, with new and excellent facilities on both main sites. The college's reputation in the community is high. Their partnerships with employers, schools and the community are extensive and productive. Most full-time staff are well qualified. The college has taken prompt action to address the lower rate of qualification of agency staff.
34. There is good promotion of equal opportunities. Achievement data are thoroughly analysed by gender, ethnicity and disability. Learners in all groups achieve at least as well, and in many cases better, than the overall college achievement. College buildings are completely accessible to learners with restricted mobility. The college fulfils its statutory requirements under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the Disability Discrimination Act. The college implements appropriate procedures to meet the requirements of the Child Protection Act. Financial management is good and value for money is excellent.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	02/03	722	52	56	-4	4,249	55	55	0
	03/04	1,444	81	60	21	3,762	75	59	16
	04/05	3,859	92			3,113	73		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	15	80	60	20	14	7	47	-40
	03/04	7	57	65	-8	2	100	52	48
	04/05	46	70			1	100		
NVQs	02/03	33	64	56	8	111	39	57	-18
	03/04	83	73	61	13	166	68	62	6
	04/05	60	50			96	58		
Other	02/03	674	51	56	-5	4,124	56	55	1
	03/04	1,354	82	60	22	3,594	75	59	16
	04/05	3,753	93			3,018	73		

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	02/03	1,078	50	52	-2	2,154	43	49	-6
	03/04	1,472	73	56	17	2,455	51	53	-3
	04/05	1,020	80			1,828	65		
GCSEs	02/03	128	55	57	-2	166	52	55	-3
	03/04	136	54	61	-7	254	41	59	-18
	04/05	87	68			164	48		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	72	81	59	22	8	100	53	47
	03/04	40	90	63	27	1	0	57	-57
	04/05	28	82			3	0		
NVQs	02/03	199	32	42	-11	343	35	49	-14
	03/04	331	70	52	18	288	64	53	11
	04/05	201	67			321	53		
Other	02/03	679	51	50	1	1,637	44	48	-4
	03/04	965	76	54	22	1,912	50	52	-2
	04/05	704	84			1,340	70		

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	02/03	1,105	33	62	-29	1,826	34	51	-17
	03/04	1,060	59	64	-5	1,780	64	53	11
	04/05	1,318	68			1,687	64		
A/A2 Levels	02/03	91	45	82	-37	115	37	63	-26
	03/04	107	75	84	-9	88	42	66	-24
	04/05	112	77			102	57		
AS Levels	02/03	275	27	61	-34	81	32	48	-16
	03/04	46	7	63	-56	41	12	50	-38
	04/05	510	64			253	42		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	296	32	50	-18	31	35	45	-10
	03/04	192	34	52	-18	30	40	43	-3
	04/05	80	45			10	50		
NVOs	02/03	85	49	51	-2	277	39	45	-6
	03/04	135	58	54	4	245	44	47	-3
	04/05	124	77			256	50		
Other	02/03	358	32	55	-23	1,322	33	54	-21
	03/04	580	68	56	12	1,376	71	56	15
	04/05	492	71			1,066	73		

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2003 to 2005.

a) Overall success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVQ rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	60	35	32	55	47
	Advanced	53	32	31	45	48
2004/05	Apprenticeship	103	33	38	47	50
	Advanced	27	19	34	41	48

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

b) Timely success rate

End Year	Apprenticeship Programme	Number of Learners *	College Framework rate **	National rate **	College NVO rate **	National rate **
2003/04	Apprenticeship	59	20	16	29	24
	Advanced	51	24	19	33	30
2004/05	Apprenticeship	93	6	21	14	29
	Advanced	27	11	21	22	31

* The number of learners who planned to complete their learning programme in the given year

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'