

North East Worcestershire College

Inspection report

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Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the college

1. North East Worcestershire College is a large general further education college based on a main campus in Redditch, which includes two outcentres in the town, a second campus in Bromsgrove and approximately 50 community venues. The large majority of learners are based at the two main sites, with the highest percentage at Redditch. The college's major catchment areas are Redditch and Bromsgrove with a very small minority of learners travelling from Birmingham. The Bromsgrove campus includes the Artrix Community Theatre and the Harley Davidson Motor Cycle Centre. A new principal was appointed in April 2010.
2. The college offers courses in all subject areas but has very small numbers in several of them. The largest number of enrolments are in health, public services and care; arts, media and publishing; and preparation for life and work. The college offers employment-based training in seven subjects with the largest numbers in health, public services and care. Most of the college's work is government-funded. College-based provision was graded in health, social care and public services and sports studies: both employment and college-based provision were graded in engineering and hairdressing and beauty therapy.
3. In Worcestershire, the percentage of pupils leaving school with more than five GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, is slightly higher than the West Midlands average but below the national average. This percentage, however, is much lower in the Redditch district.
4. Worcestershire has a population of around 500,000 and is largely a rural county, although nearly three-quarters of its population live in towns or Worcester city. The social and economic environment is generally favourable; however, areas of deprivation exist, including Redditch. Unemployment in Worcestershire is below regional and national levels. However, the Redditch district has a higher level of unemployment than in the county and nationally. The percentage of the population from minority ethnic groups is around 4.7% but is much higher in Redditch at 7.3%.
5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the college:
 - Upton Warren Outdoor Education Centre
 - Frank Chapman Outdoor Education Centre
 - Tripod
 - The REDI Centre
 - Youth Afloat
 - First Response Training

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to16	136 part-time learners
Further education (16 to18)	1,899 full-time learners 352 part-time learners 289 full-time learners
Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	115 learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	399 full-time learners 6,094 part-time learners
Learning for social and personal development	782 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	346 learners 248 apprentices
Adult safeguarded learning	782 part-time learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	Grade
Health, social care and public services	2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Sport, leisure and recreation	3

Overall effectiveness

6. North East Worcestershire College is a lively, modern, safe and friendly place to study. It is a good college with some outstanding features. Teachers and managers are committed to supporting learners and the college has an outstanding range of courses to meet most learners' needs. The college collaborates highly successfully with a wide range of partners, including an international motor cycle company, local schools and a community theatre trust. Most of its resources are of a high standard. The level of personal care and support for learners is very high. Academic support is improving and it is good.
7. Most learners are successful in gaining their qualifications although not all acquire the highest grades they could achieve, particularly at advanced level. Learners on apprenticeships have high success rates in almost all subjects and the large majority finish on time. Success rates on Train to Gain courses are increasing and they are around average with most learners finishing within the

time allocated. Learners enjoy college, gaining confidence, maturity and knowledge about healthy lifestyles. They learn a useful range of skills in preparation for employment and make a very positive contribution to the college and the community. A high percentage of learners carry on their studies from foundation to intermediate level. Progression rates onto advanced level and into higher education are more modest but increasing. Attendance is satisfactory.

8. The majority of lessons are at least good with examples of outstanding lessons in most subject areas. Assessment supports learning well. Teachers use information and learning technology very effectively. In more than a few lessons, however, teachers do not always stretch learners sufficiently to ensure they make consistently good or better progress.
9. The strategic direction of the college is clear. It is well supported by staff. Governance is good. Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough. High priority is given to promotion of equality and diversity but not all teachers maximise opportunities to develop equality and diversity themes in lessons. Self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical. This is mainly because of shortcomings in data accuracy and control. The college provides good value for money.

Main findings

- Learners' success rates on long courses are increasing and very high, particularly at foundation level for younger learners and at intermediate and advanced level for adults. At advanced level, where the majority of young learners study full-time, success rates have improved to just above average. Learners on vocational courses make generally good progress, but learners on GCE courses often under-perform.
- Employment-based learners achieve very well and the majority, particularly apprentices, complete their courses within the time allowed. Completion within the time allowed by learners on Train to Gain courses is lower but improving because of effective strategies put in place to monitor their progress. Different groups of learners have broadly similar success rates although male adults are often more successful than females.
- Learners show high levels of enjoyment and they develop their personal and social skills very well. College life prepares them well for the future and equips them with a useful range of skills to promote their future well-being. Learners contribute positively to college and community life in a wide range of ways.
- The majority of lessons are good. Teachers plan the better lessons well, with a wide range of activities to maintain learners' interest and enjoyment, ensuring good progress. However, in a minority of lessons, learners make much less progress often because they participate too little, tasks have insufficient challenge or the learning environment is inappropriate.
- Teachers and learners' use of information and learning technology has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is now good with some

outstanding practice. Teachers integrate literacy and numeracy skills well into lessons. This increasingly supports learners' skill development. Lesson plans are sensitive to the needs of individuals within teaching groups but promotion of equality and diversity in the majority of lessons and at reviews for employment-based learners is too limited.

- Assessment of learners' practical skills and coursework is effective. Staff return written work promptly and provide learners with helpful suggestions on how to make further improvements. Arrangements for monitoring learners' progress are satisfactory. Staff use individual learning plans effectively to record agreed actions for improvement in assignments.
- The range of provision is outstanding and meets the diverse needs of employers and the local community very well. Curriculum planning is intelligent, responsive and flexible. Revisions to the integration of key skills development within the curriculum are effective. Subject-based enrichment is a strong feature but few learners participate in a broader range of cross-curricular activities.
- Partnership work is outstanding and brings benefits for learners and stakeholders. Provision developed through partnerships supports the college's aim of reaching out and enabling underrepresented groups to participate, achieve and progress. Work with schools to develop the 14-19 curriculum and with community partnerships, including work with the Artrix Theatre, are impressive.
- Pastoral care and much of the guidance and support for learners are outstanding. However, not all learners receive sufficiently regular individual tutorials or have robust enough individual learning plans with specific targets to ensure they reach their full potential. Inclusion of health and well-being topics is not mandatory in group tutorials meaning that reinforcement of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle is low for a minority of learners.
- Strategic aims are clear, well focused and largely successful in the achievement of high standards. The development plan includes specific actions and timescales for the completion of strategic objectives. The college meets the majority successfully. Most targets set to improve performance are demanding but the target for attendance is insufficiently ambitious.
- The college's approach to safeguarding is good. Most learners demonstrate good awareness of health and safety practices. Risk assessments are generally thorough. A few lack detail and their display is not prominent. Equality and diversity have a high profile and the college meets legislative requirements.
- The college's overall self-assessment report makes extensive use of mostly accurate data but it does not identify all of the areas for improvement. Curriculum self-assessment reports and action plans are insufficiently robust. Reports overstate the quality of teaching and learning because of a minority of over generous lesson observation grades. Managers have taken swift action to tackle these shortcomings in quality assurance and the college has good capacity to improve.

What does North East Worcestershire College need to do to improve further?

- Embed the strategies for ensuring that learners on Train to Gain courses complete their qualifications within the time allowed. Ensure managers and assessors monitor the progress of these learners closely and regularly.
- Raise teachers' expectations of all learners to ensure that they are challenged to reach their full potential and develop their independent learning skills. Develop teachers' skills in using questions and other teaching strategies to challenge learners, extend their knowledge and skills as well as make them think for themselves.
- Embed the effective promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and at work based learning reviews through the sharing of good practice, further staff development and increasing the focus on this during lesson observations.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons by ensuring that self-assessment of teaching and learning is comprehensive and rigorous, and effective action plans are in place to address identified areas for improvement, for both staff and subject areas.
- Develop a broader programme of cross-college enrichment that ensures that learners have the opportunity to broaden their horizons outside their chosen subject area.
- Set a challenging target to improve attendance further and place high emphasis on tackling pockets of lower attendance robustly.
- Ensure that individual tutorials include challenging targets and occur frequently to ensure that all learners fulfil their full potential. Make sure that group tutorials cover mandatory items related to health, well-being, personal and social development.
- Improve the identification of strengths and areas for improvement in subject areas by using accurate and comprehensive data, increasing the rigour of the lesson observation scheme and by ensuring that evaluation is fully robust and self-critical.
- Ensure that risk assessments are detailed and their display is prominent across the college.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the high levels of support they receive including very good specialist support
- the friendly atmosphere and safe environment
- being treated as adults and the mutual respect between staff and learners
- effective preparation for employment or further study
- the way in which college life helps develop their confidence and skills

- the very enjoyable experience of college life and the wider opportunities available to them.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more computers available for independent study
- bigger classrooms for large groups.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the college's very effective and highly responsive approach to meeting their needs
- the high levels of support that they and their staff receive from the college
- good and well-used communication channels at all levels.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the very few occasions when staff do not respond to their queries quickly enough.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. The college's record since the last inspection shows a consistent trend in increasing success rates to a high level. The rate of increase is most marked in employment-based provision, which was identified as an area for improvement. The rate of progress varies in other areas identified. The college has made less progress in ensuring that learners achieve key skills qualifications at an appropriate level, although recent revisions to the curriculum are proving much more effective. Attendance and punctuality, although remaining satisfactory, are improving, particularly in the last year.
11. Established arrangements for quality assurance are in place although self-assessment at curriculum level is insufficiently self-critical. The college is taking prompt and decisive action to support managers in applying increased rigour to the process and in using accurate and reliable data effectively at curriculum level. The evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning has been overgenerous; however, inspectors found that lesson observers are increasingly rigorous and sharply focused on evaluating the learning and progress in lessons.
12. Staff at all levels demonstrates an unremitting drive towards excellence. They are fully supportive of the new principal and managers, and highly committed to the college and learners' success. The college considers and uses stakeholder views well in all its work. The swiftness and effectiveness of action to recognise and begin to resolve areas for improvement, along with stability in staffing, many excellent resources and a strong financial position, provide the college with good capacity to improve.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

13. Learners' success rates on long courses overall have increased steadily over the last three years and are well above the average in similar colleges. Rates for learners aged 16 to 18 dipped in 2007/08 but recovered in 2008/09 and are particularly high at foundation level. At advanced level, however, rates for this age group are just above average. Long course success rates for adults are very high at intermediate and advanced level. Success rates in the majority of subject areas are well above average. Success rates on GCE AS level provision, whilst improving, are below average.
14. A high number of learners achieve key skills qualifications but up until the current year, these have been mostly at a lower level than their main qualification aim. A recent and much needed revision of the college's key skills policy is ensuring that most current learners are developing key skills at an

- appropriate level. Standards of work, particularly in vocational skills, are generally at least good. Attendance is improving and it is satisfactory.
15. Employment-based learners achieve very well. The large majority of those on apprenticeships complete their qualifications within the time allowed. A significant proportion of apprentices progress on to advanced apprenticeships. Employed learners on Train to Gain courses have been less successful at completing their qualifications within the time allowed but current learners are making much better progress.
 16. Most groups of learners achieve equally well. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve at least as well and often better than their peers. There is parity between the achievement of the relatively few sizeable minority ethnic groups and between younger males and females. A small gap, however, is emerging between male and female adult success rates, where males outperform females. Learners from challenging or disadvantaged backgrounds often succeed well; the majority of learners on Entry to Employment courses achieve positive outcomes.
 17. Too few learners at advanced level make better than expected progress compared to their prior attainment. The percentage of learners who achieve high grades at intermediate and advanced level is well below average. Learners' progress at other levels is improving and overall, progress in the current year, as seen by inspectors during lesson observations, is mostly good. The progression rate between levels of study is high from foundation to intermediate level. Relatively few learners progress to higher education, although the numbers applying successfully in the current year is much higher.
 18. Learners really enjoy college life. They thrive on the opportunities that are available to them, developing confidence and making a valuable and meaningful contribution to college and community life. Learners value the safe environment and feel secure. Almost all adopt safe practices but in a few settings they do not always prioritise health and safety measures. Initiatives, such as a healthy living fair, strong promotion of sports and 'Free Fruit Fridays', are working very successfully to increase learners' awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles.
 19. Learners develop a broad range of personal and social skills that prepare them well for the future. Projects, often inspiring and creative, productively develop skills in enterprise, problem solving and team work. For example, theatrical productions based on pertinent themes involve a wide range of learners and have a positive impact on learners' social, moral and cultural development.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

20. The majority of lessons are good and a minority are outstanding. However, inspectors judged more lessons to be satisfactory and found that outstanding

features were less widespread than indicated by the self-assessment report. Most lesson observers have a clear focus on evaluating learning and rigour in their grades when observing jointly with inspectors. However, a previous tendency to overgrade is evident from lesson observation records, comparison of inspectors' grades and college grades and an evaluation of the comprehensiveness of the process.

21. In good or better lessons, learners have very good attitudes to learning, are thoroughly involved, make good progress, assess themselves and their peers frequently and take part in evaluating the lesson's effectiveness. Teachers use questions well to ensure that learners understand what they have been taught. Most practical lessons are well resourced, enabling the majority of learners to develop high levels of vocational skill. The use of information and learning technology has improved significantly since the last inspection, with much good and some outstanding practice. Learners fail to make good progress in a minority of lessons. Where they are less involved this is due to insufficiently challenging tasks or an inappropriate learning environment in a very few cases.
22. Good staff development opportunities are improving teaching and learning, as confirmed by teachers and learners. However, promotion of equality and diversity themes in lessons and work-based reviews is too limited, despite recent staff development to resolve this problem. Lesson plans are sensitive to the specific needs of individual learners but the promotion of equality and diversity themes is insufficient in most lessons and reviews.
23. Initial and diagnostic assessments identify learners' additional learning needs effectively. The proportion of the learners requiring support who take it up has increased and is high.
24. The assessment of learners' practical skills and coursework is effective. Prompt marking of written work includes constructive suggestions on how to make further improvements. Individual learning plans record appropriately the actions learners agree with their teachers to improve their performance. All learners have individual learning plans. However, not all are fully effective in monitoring learners' progress closely or in ensuring they attain the highest levels of achievement.
25. The college has developed a curriculum that responds well to the needs and interests of learners. It is socially inclusive and increases participation in education and training successfully. A wide range of provision for full and part-time learners provides good opportunities for progression from foundation level to higher education, including a wide range of relevant courses for learners aged 14 to 16. The college enables progression to higher education through its own higher education provision and through links with local universities. The recently revised key skills curriculum provides a comprehensive coverage of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology that matches learners' ability more appropriately.

26. Staff at all levels are involved in highly effective partnership work which is used very constructively to inform curriculum development. The college works well with a wide range of employers to plan and implement its curriculum. The curriculum planning process is systematic and uses local and regional intelligence very well. Partnership work with schools, as part of the 'Forward Consortium' to develop the diploma provision, works very well. The college's Foundation Learning Curriculum implementation strategy is good and is being promoted across Worcestershire.
27. Enrichment activities to broaden learners' experience and support their cultural development are satisfactory. Managers do not fully monitor the take up of enrichment activities. Activities focus mostly on subject-based enrichment.
28. The college is highly responsive to the needs of employers. Employers value the quick response to requests for training and the flexibility in delivery. They are highly satisfied with the quality of training and the positive impact it has on improving employees' skills, boosting confidence and supporting progression in the job market. Communication with employers is highly effective.
29. Learners complete a full assessment of their learning needs prior to interview. Careful guidance places learners on to a course at a level appropriate to their ability. The college has appropriately strengthened entry requirements and the rigour of the interview process, particularly for GCE courses, to ensure learners are well placed to succeed. Induction is comprehensive and valuable to learners.
30. Identification of additional learning support needs takes place early and support is in place promptly. Learners value highly the additional support they receive from staff. It enables them to move forward well in their personal and career development. The identification of learners at risk of leaving early is prompt. A member of staff provides them with assistance to ensure regular attendance and support. Staff monitor learners receiving the educational maintenance allowance. These learners achieve well.
31. Tutorial support is good. The allocation of time for tutorials is generous. The group tutorial programme covers personal and social development needs effectively but it often focuses more on providing extra time to work on coursework and not all learners receive reinforcement of health and well-being topics. Individual tutorials vary in effectiveness. Most ensure learners succeed with their studies but shortcomings exist in the quality of target setting, the use of initial assessment information to guide learners' progress and the frequency of tutorials for a minority of learners. Monitoring of employment-based learners is highly effective and enables learners, employers and managers to track learners' progress well.
32. Attendance rates are satisfactory. The monitoring of attendance is robust and has resulted in improvements over the past three years, however, the college's target for attendance is insufficiently challenging.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

33. Strategic aims are clear with a strong and successful focus on raising standards. The development plan provides specific actions and timescales for the completion of strategic objectives. Frequent meetings to monitor the effectiveness of action plans take place between managers and staff at all levels and across both main campuses. Programme area managers and heads of department review performance against key performance indicators regularly. The college works formally with a number of other institutions to share good practice and monitor performance. Most targets to improve performance are demanding but the target for attendance is unchallenging. The college uses information from employers, learners and stakeholders in the community highly effectively to ensure that national and local priorities are met. Managers analyse systematically and use feedback from key stakeholders to improve provision.
34. Governors are well informed and clear about the requirements of their role. They provide effective leadership, direction and challenge. They work productively with senior managers when setting the strategic direction of the college. Arrangements for governance ensure the independence of the governing body. Governors monitor all aspects of the college's performance frequently and meetings are well attended. Their work in scrutinising the quality of provision lacks sufficient depth.
35. The college's approach to safeguarding is good. A comprehensive central record is held containing appropriate details relating to staff, volunteers, franchise providers and contractors. The review of the well composed safeguarding policy takes place annually. The college works closely with external agencies to safeguard learners. All staff and governors have received appropriate training. The promotion of the anti-bullying policy to learners at induction and during learners' conferences is effective. Bullying at college is rare and staff deal with incidents promptly. Managers monitor carefully and investigate accidents fully. This has led to improvements in operational practices. Most learners demonstrate good awareness of health and safety practices in practical and workshop environments. However, in a few settings not all learners implement good practices routinely. Risk assessments are generally good but in a few cases lack detail and their display is insufficiently prominent.
36. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. A detailed single equality scheme is in place. Training for staff and governors is thorough. Innovations include a performing arts and media learners' DVD that promotes equality and diversity widely. Learners from minority ethnic heritage, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, male and female learners and learners who receive educational maintenance allowances achieve well at college. A harmonious and respectful environment exists for learners and staff. Although there are examples of strong promotion of equality and diversity across the

college, promotion through lessons is not maximised in every subject areas. The college has a prayer room and flexible timetabling allows Muslim students to attend a local mosque for prayer. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups at the college is higher than the local population. Although managers analyse the recruitment of staff meticulously and the representation of minority ethnic staff is improving, they are underrepresented in management.

37. The college has a well devised and succesful strategy to seek learners' views. All learners' representatives receive well focused training on how to fulfil their role. They gather views routinely on different themes such as teaching techniques from their peers and meet regularly with managers. Feedback on the outcomes is provided to learners promptly. Learners are involved in several committees including those for equality and diversity, health and safety and campus advisory committees. Learners participate in selection procedures for senior college managers including the principal. The two student governors attend meetings regularly and contribute well.
38. The college's self-assessment report uses data extensively when evaluating performance. The analysis of data is generally effective in the college-wide report but evaluation of progression and destination data is insufficient. The report includes many strengths but it does not contain all of the areas of improvement identified during inspection. Subject area self-assessment reports and action plans are insufficiently robust. Data in the reports are not fully accurate and evaluation does not always cover the breadth of provision.
39. Considerable expansion and updating of accommodation has taken place over the last five years. Accommodation and resources for learning are attractive, modern and mostly of a high standard. Group sizes in a few areas, however, are too large for the available space. Plans are in hand to increase space substantially to resolve this concern. A carefully considered strategy for sustainability is in place to reduce carbon whenever possible. The college provides good outcomes for learners. It uses its resources efficiently and effectively and value for money is good.

Subject areas

Health, social care and public services

Grade 2

Context

40. The college offers full-time courses from foundation to advanced level in health and social care and in uniformed public services. About a third of the 1,526 learners are aged 16 to 18 and most study full time. The large majority of adult learners study part-time. Most learners are of White British heritage. Around 10 school pupils aged 14 to 16 study at foundation level in uniformed public services. A range of additional qualifications, mainly in health studies, are available on a part-time basis.

Key findings

- Achievements on the majority of courses have improved to at or above the average in similar colleges. A significant number of learners taking health and social care courses achieve high grades and exceed expectations compared to their prior attainment. The progress made by learners on uniform public services courses has improved significantly in the current year.
- Learners develop key skills in numeracy, communication and ICT well. Many uniformed public services learners also gain accreditation in the wider key skill of working with others. Health and social care learners take the opportunity to resit a GCSE in mathematics, although success rates are just below average. Punctuality and attendance are satisfactory.
- Progression to further study or vocationally relevant employment is high. The large majority of learners on health and social care courses progress to higher education. A high percentage of learners move to the next level of study with a minority transferring to apprenticeships or other programmes to meet their revised career aspirations more fully.
- Learners on uniformed public services develop a wide range of vocationally relevant skills including teamwork and leadership skills. Health and social care learners develop effective research and teamwork skills and gain the ability to respect and value individual differences. Learners reflect carefully on their progress and set realistic and constructive personal targets.
- Learners enjoy their studies, particularly work placements in health and social care and opportunities to experience work with a number of uniformed and public services. Learners are well aware of their responsibility to maintain a healthy and safe life style. They have raised money successfully for charities such as 'Help for Heroes'. Several learners are volunteers in a range of settings outside college hours.
- Teaching and learning are good. Well planned lessons provide a wide variety of learning activities. Group profiles highlight an individual's academic and social support needs; however, teachers do not use this information well to challenge

and extend the more able learners. In better lessons, innovative activities encourage learners to participate enthusiastically and learn quickly and effectively. A slow pace in less effective lessons results in a minority of learners losing interest.

- Assessment is good. Teachers' feedback is constructive and supportive with clear guidance for improvement. The standard of learners' work is good and shows evidence of wide research and good ICT skills. However, learners do not always provide bibliographies and references for web sites do not always include the date of access. Internal verification is thorough.
- Personal support is very good and contributes well to improving achievement. Early identification of learning or personal needs ensures appropriate support is in place quickly. Strong links with external support services benefit learners. Liaison with parents and guardians is productive. Academic support is good, although arrangements for monitoring of progress and target setting are not sufficiently robust.
- Strong links exist with the full range of uniformed and public services as well as a range of statutory and private organisations. These enhance the learning experiences and progression routes of learners. Learners complete additional vocationally relevant qualifications such as first aid and sports leader awards successfully.
- Course level self-assessment is evaluative and detailed; however, when aggregated by subject area, self-assessment becomes less self-critical and a minority of strengths are overstated. Good leadership and management have ensured that areas identified by course teams for improvement are resolved promptly and effectively. Course leaders are beginning to use data much more effectively and routinely to monitor the quality of provision.
- Teachers are well qualified, experienced and drawn from a wide range of vocationally relevant professions. The teams are committed to improving their programmes and provide a varied and supportive framework to encourage learners to develop socially and academically before progressing onto their chosen career. Resources are satisfactory, although several computers are in need of updating. Sports facilities are good.
- Safeguarding as well as equality and diversity are key drivers for ensuring the quality of provision. All teachers have completed safeguarding and equality and diversity training as part of their career and professional development. A few teachers do not maximise opportunities to develop equality and diversity themes in lessons and in assessment.

What does North East Worcestershire College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure a consistent approach to recording and monitoring learners' progress through sharing good practice on the use of individual learning plans and ways of recording individual progress at reviews. Make sure that, at tutorials, tutors

review and update information on diagnostic testing, progress against minimum target grades and agreed action against targets.

- Use information about more able learners' individual learning needs more effectively to develop teaching strategies and a wider range of formative assessment methods to challenge and extend these learners. Increase the emphasis on ensuring an appropriate pace in lessons to prevent learners losing interest.
- Embed promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and assessment by supporting teachers to develop themes fully and auditing teaching resources to ensure that they reflect fully the diversity within society. Encourage learners to consider diversity more fully when choosing images to illustrate their assignment work.
- Improve the quality assurance of subjects by reviewing the self-assessment process to ensure that it uses robust analysis and evaluation leading to realistic grading at course and subject level.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Context

41. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time engineering and motor vehicle courses from foundation to advanced level along with apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. Some 519 learners follow college-based courses, the majority of whom are adults. Of the 122 learners on employment-based courses, 42 are following Train to Gain courses. Very few learners are female. A few are from a minority ethnic heritage. Young apprentice programmes are offered, in partnership with the local consortium, for 24 school pupils and foundation and higher Diplomas for 50 pupils.

Key findings

- Success rates for full and part-time qualifications are consistently very high. On a number of courses, all learners stay on their courses and pass successfully. Learners on engineering courses produce work of a high standard. Mechanical engineering learners' machining test pieces are of a high standard of accuracy and finish, comparable to industry requirements.
- Success rates on apprenticeships are increasing but just below the average overall. The rate of completion within the time allowed, however, is above average. The success rate is high on motor vehicle advanced apprenticeships, but for the small number of electro-mechanical engineering apprenticeships, the rate is well below average.
- Completion of Train to Gain courses within the time allocated is high. Success rates are a little below average but are increasing strongly in the current year, having declined in each of the two previous years. Across the courses in engineering, manufacturing and transportation success rates are variable.
- Well-forged links with the Harley Davidson motorcycle company bring tremendous benefits to learners and college staff, raising the profile of the engineering provision markedly. Workshops are tidy with up to date and well maintained equipment. Classrooms are airy and well resourced with information and learning technology. A few are too small for the growing numbers of learners. Risk assessments lack detail about risk control measures and their display is insufficiently prominent.
- Teaching and learning for college-based learners are very good. Lesson planning is good, teachers mix theory and practical training well. The regular use of information and learning technology is particularly effective. Learners contribute well and the rapport between staff and learners is good. The use of questions to check learners' understanding is thorough. Internal verification is not consistently rigorous; for example, the advanced planning of sampling is not always effective to ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of assessment.

- Work-based assessment of engineering apprentices is good. On performing manufacturing operations courses, Train to Gain assessors make full use of video and audio evidence when carrying out workplace assessments. On motor vehicle and engineering courses, reviews and assessments are take place frequently and often at short notice or out of hours to meet learners and employers' needs.
- Learners enjoy their studies and make good progress. Whilst timekeeping is generally good, attendance, although improving, is satisfactory. Learners and employers speak highly of all aspects of provision. The subject area celebrates learners' success well through an annual presentation evening held off-site at which employers and parents are invited.
- Learners undertake a wide range of useful mainly subject-based enrichment activities. The range includes visits to relevant industries, such as Jaguar and BMW, and learners visit relevant trade shows and prestige employers. Learners thoroughly enjoy social events, such as paint balling.
- Leadership and management are good. Most provision is of a very high standard. Self-assessment, however, understates the weaknesses in success rates on employment-based provision. A limited understanding of data and a lack of accountability because of some unclear management responsibilities has results in slow progress in improving these outcomes. Managers have recently instigated many initiatives, which are tackling these concerns rapidly.

What does North East Worcestershire College need to do to improve further?

- Put in place internal verification sampling plans covering all elements of the process in advance of assessments taking place. Ensure that managers regularly and fully check the content and coverage of internal verifiers' sampling plans and other internal verification documents.
- Increase the accountability for employment-based provision within curriculum teams and clarify management responsibilities, particularly for apprenticeships. Share good practice in raising success rates on college-based provision among staff across the technology department.
- Increase the rigour of self-assessment of this provision and the effectiveness of action plans to bring about improvement. Ensure that staff have access to current validated performance data for employment-based learning programmes and become confident in using it to ensure continuous improvement.
- Improve the quality of workshop risk assessments by providing more detail and emphasis on risk control measures. Display risk assessments adjacent to the potential hazard.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 3

Context

42. The range of courses includes national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 3 in hairdressing and barbering as well as levels 2 and 3 and a vocationally related qualification (VRQ) in beauty therapy, an intermediate course in nail services and holistic therapy courses. A national diploma in beauty therapy is available. Of 841 learners, just under half study full time. The large majority of learners study hairdressing. Around 140 learners are on apprenticeships and Train to Gain courses, the large majority in hairdressing. Some 54 school pupils are on a salon services foundation level course or the hairdressing and beauty therapy Diploma. Very few learners are from a Black or minority heritage. A very small minority are male.

Key findings

- Success rates are high on NVQ level 1 in hairdressing, VRQ level 3 in beauty therapy and on most part-time and short courses. Success rates on most other courses, where the majority of learners study, are average. Pass rates are high but retention rates are below average on a few courses. Success rates on apprenticeships are high and average on Train to Gain courses. The large majority of learners complete within the time allowed.
- Learners care for clients well. Learners make good progress in beauty therapy and demonstrate high professional standards. Progress is satisfactory in hairdressing as is the standard of work. Hairdressing learners do not consistently demonstrate high standards of tidiness or high awareness of health and safety. Apprentices make good progress and develop key skills well.
- Most learners are well motivated and enjoy learning. However, attendance is low in a few lessons, which disrupts learning and progression for both them and their peers. Learners' written work and portfolios are satisfactory.
- The majority of teaching and learning in hairdressing is satisfactory. In beauty therapy, teaching and learning are good with some outstanding practical teaching. Better lessons involve plenty of challenge based on teachers' high expectations of learners. In less effective lessons, learners are too passive, challenge is insufficient and in a minority of practical hairdressing lessons, professional standards are too low.
- Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. A minority of the accommodation for practical hairdressing is cramped and needs refurbishment. The number and range of clients is insufficient. Learners spend too much time using training head blocks or working on each other, which causes some dissatisfaction and detracts from their experience of a realistic work environment.

- The range of provision provides good progression routes from foundation to advanced level along with expanding employment-based provision. The newly introduced vocationally related course in beauty therapy is a useful addition to develop the skills of less confident learners.
- Learners benefit from a satisfactory, mainly subject-based, enrichment programme. Events include trips abroad, participation in competitions, a college-wide enrichment week as well as additional short courses relevant to industry. Links with employers for work experience for full-time learners are underdeveloped.
- Support for college-based learners is good. Effective links between the college's support services and the teaching team ensure rapid referral and monitoring of those in need of support. Staff support learners with a wide range of learning, personal and social needs well. Parents, guardians or carers are involved fully where appropriate.
- Managers have a clear focus on raising success rates by ensuring they meet a set of challenging performance targets. Managers monitor success rates effectively on apprenticeship programmes but less effectively on Train to Gain courses. Staff work well as a team with regular formal meetings. Managers have clear lines of accountability. The observation of teaching and learning process overstates the quality of lessons.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. All learners feel safe and protected. The college effectively supports learners who raise safeguarding issues.
- All staff contribute to the self-assessment process. However, the process is insufficiently self-critical and overstates the strengths within the provision. The self-assessment report does not identify several significant areas for improvement, including the accuracy and completeness of data. Consequently, the report does not provide a sound basis for bringing about improvement.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners report effective promotion of anti-bullying as well as intolerance of harassment and discrimination. Mutual respect and valuing of differences are prominent in staff and learners' relationships. The majority of lessons broaden learners' knowledge of equality and diversity. Promotion of these themes for employment-based learners is less effective and for learners on Train to Gain courses it is underdeveloped.

What does North East Worcestershire College need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen and embed strategies to improve retention of learners on substantive courses. Ensure that managers and teachers monitor retention rates regularly and take action promptly to support learners at risk of withdrawal.
- Ensure high standards of work in hairdressing by teachers setting and reinforcing high expectations of learners' work in respect of health and safety, hygiene and professionalism.

- Share good practice in teaching and learning across the subject area to increase the amount of good or better teaching. Identify clearly what needs to improve, through lesson observations and regular evaluations of the standards of work.
- Provide a range of work experience opportunities for all learners to increase their employability skills and experience of their chosen industry by strengthening links with local industry.
- Support teachers to understand and use accurate and reliable data, covering learner and employer responsive provision, to inform self-assessment. Increase the rigour of self-assessment by ensuring the evidence base for judgements is comprehensive and reliable. Add to the lesson observation process by including regular peer observations to evaluate standards of work.

Sport, leisure and recreation

Grade 3

Context

43. The college offers courses from foundation to advanced level in sport and fitness. A range of industrially relevant part-time additional qualifications are available. Of the 533 learners, just over half are aged 16 to 18. Most learners study full time. Just under half of the learners are female and a very few are from Black and minority ethnic groups. Some 38 school pupils study for accredited courses at foundation level part time.

Key findings

- Success rates on long courses are in line with the average in similar colleges but have declined over the last three years. Success rates are high or very high on most additional qualifications but are below average on advanced level courses. On advanced courses, pass rates are low for GCE courses and retention is low on national diploma courses. Retention of learners in the current year is slightly improved.
- Learners make adequate progress compared to their prior attainment but the majority make much better progress in their coaching and performance skills. Although standards of written work are good, a minority of learners make slow progress in completing units. The majority of learners have developed good research skills but others lack independence and rely on teachers too much.
- Learners make good improvements to their potential economic well-being. Their participation in coaching work experience, voluntary work along with the additional qualifications they obtain prepares them well for work. Progression into higher education is improving, in the current year more learners have obtained provisional places at university than in previous years.
- Learners make positive contributions to the community by providing coaching sessions in schools and the community. They are active in raising funds for various charities through participation in sporting challenges. Sports therapy learners assist effectively at a wide range of sporting events including the London Marathon.
- The majority of lessons are satisfactory and a minority are good or better. Teachers use information and learning technology well to enhance learning. In classroom-based lessons, teachers use information about learners well to plan personalised learning. In these lessons, learners participate well and usually make good progress. During workshops, where learners work individually, strategies to encourage learners' full concentration are often ineffective, resulting in slow progress for a minority. Learners receive sufficient assessment feedback to improve their grades.
- The range of provision meets the needs and interests of learners. Learners complete a good range of additional industrially relevant qualifications and participate well in enrichment activities that broaden their experiences. The

range of full-time provision is satisfactory. Progression routes are available for sports courses but not for fitness provision beyond intermediate level.

- Learners are well supported personally and socially. Additional learning support is effective. Guidance about progression to higher education is improving. Monitoring of learners' progress varies in effectiveness. Often, targets lack timescales and have too little guidance about how learners will achieve them. Identification of learners at risk of leaving early is improving and seen in the increasing retention rates.
- The recent amalgamation of sports staff into one team has improved communication and joint work to raise the standard of provision, although the impact of this work is not fully apparent. Staff work well together. The deployment of teachers' specialist skills is not fully effective. For example, a few sports teachers regularly teach exercise sessions in the fitness suite without suitable fitness qualifications.
- Staff carry out appropriate risk assessments and pre-activity health screening effectively. Most learners have a good understanding of health and safety practice. Most sports environments have safe working practices but staff do not always correct weaknesses in exercise performance in the fitness suite. A minority of learners do not always adhere to safe practice such as cooling down following exercise.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Various activities raise learners' awareness of this area including wheelchair basketball. The use of appropriate images challenges stereotyping across the provision. However, monitoring of the recruitment and achievement of different groups of learners is insufficient.
- The self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical and does not adequately identify areas for improvement. The use of data to inform self-assessment is insufficient. Lesson observations, as part of the quality assurance of teaching and learning, are insufficiently evaluative of learners' progress across a broad enough range of settings. The resulting action plans for improvement for individual teachers lack detail.

What does North East Worcestershire College need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen and embed strategies to increase the numbers of learners completing their courses by ensuring that managers and teachers pay close attention to identifying learners at risk of leaving early and taking prompt and firm action to support them to stay on at college and to complete their assessments in the allocated time.
- Identify effective practice in target setting for learners and share this across the team to ensure that learners making slow progress are encouraged to develop more quickly and that they are aware of what they need to do to improve.
- Use accurate and reliable data to inform self-assessment. Use self-assessment to inform the development and rigorous monitoring of actions to improve

satisfactory aspects of provision and tackle areas for improvement. Ensure that the use of data monitors and evaluates the progress of different groups of learners.

- Develop the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning to take account of the range of learning settings and ensure a sharper focus on evaluating learning. Make sure action plans for individual teachers are specific and detailed.
- Deploy teachers to make the best of their specialist knowledge and qualifications. Ensure that all staff who teach in the fitness suite are sufficiently qualified.

Information about the inspection

44. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the Skills Funding Agency or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
45. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at the questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes across the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

North East Worcestershire College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	2830	2353	477	0
Part-time learners	6560	279	6124	777
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2			
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2			
How well do learners progress?	2			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2			
How safe do learners feel?	2			
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	1			
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	1			
Quality of provision	2	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1			
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1			
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	1			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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