

Wilberforce Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Unique reference number:	130580
Name of lead inspector:	Andrew Johnson HMI
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Information about the provider

1. Wilberforce College is a sixth form college on the eastern edge of the city of Kingston upon Hull. It is one of two sixth form colleges in the city, which also has a large general further education college. A high proportion of students live in areas of significant economic deprivation. Despite generally rising standards in secondary schools, the percentage of students achieving five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, is much lower than average. In several local schools lower than average rates of attendance are commonplace. The proportion of young people aged from 16 to 18 who are not in education, employment or training is high.
2. The college offers courses in most subject areas. All students study full time and almost all are aged 16 to 18. More than three quarters of students study at advanced level. Around two thirds of lessons consist of vocational BTEC programmes. A high proportion of students study English and/or mathematics at GCSE to improve the grades they attained at school. The college has continued to grow and last year there were 200 more students than at the time of the previous inspection. This year, for the first time, the college enrolled 47 students aged 14 to 16. These students study at the college on a full-time basis due to the impending closure of a local secondary school. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is low but almost double that found in the local population.
3. The college's mission is to 'be a college of outstanding quality, encouraging and enabling the fulfilment of individual potential and working with the community to increase aspirations, participation and achievement'.
4. The inspection took into account all of the provision offered by the college. Provision in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and English was inspected in depth.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: Further education (16 to 18)	1,661 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	52 full-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	1
Equality and diversity	1

Subject Areas	
Science	3
Mathematics and statistics	2
Information and communication technology	3
English	2

Overall effectiveness

5. Wilberforce is a good college. It has several outstanding features. Outcomes for virtually all groups of students are good or better. The career aspirations and life chances of students are significantly improved. Outstanding care, guidance and support are at the heart of the college's success. Most students succeed in gaining their qualifications, particularly at advanced level; however, levels of success are lower on intermediate-level programmes. The quality of education offered across different subjects is good and in some cases outstanding, although a few satisfactory areas remain. Lessons are well taught and enable students to make good progress, although on a few occasions learning is not personalised sufficiently to enable all students to achieve their full potential. This is particularly the case in GCSE English and mathematics. The range of advanced academic and vocational programmes is extensive and supported by a broad range of intermediate-level programmes. This means that students who leave local schools, including those with lower than average levels of attainment, are given ample opportunities for progression.

6. The Principal, college leaders and governors have set out a clear and ambitious mission to ensure that students experience outstanding success. Financial management is strong. Resources for teaching and learning have improved and are good. The college has excellent arrangements to safeguard students. Quality assurance and self-assessment procedures are thorough and enable accurate annual evaluation of the work of the college. However, a minority of departmental managers do not use these systems successfully to ensure the highest standards in teaching and learning. The promotion of equality and diversity is fully embedded into the college's work, particularly in the open approach it takes to recruitment. The college provides good value for money. Based on the college's track record of improvement, it demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

Main findings

- Students' outcomes are good. Success rates on advanced vocational courses, which make up the majority of provision in the college, have improved and are consistently high. Most A-level subjects have success rates around the high national average. After a slight dip in the proportion of students completing their courses successfully on AS courses in 2009/10, college data show that there were significant improvements the following year to bring it back in line with expectations.
- Most groups of students make good progress compared to their prior attainment and some make exceptional progress. Data show no significant differences between the achievements of different groups of students. Students in some subject areas achieve exceptionally well, for example in health and social care, and sport.
- The college is aware that low proportions of students attain the highest grades and is seeking to improve this area of its work. On a minority of courses, the high standards aspired to by the college have not been reached, in particular in GCSE English and mathematics. The proportion of students on intermediate-level vocational courses who complete their courses successfully is around the national average, although pass rates are high.
- Students develop excellent economic and social skills. A high proportion of students who complete intermediate-level courses progress to advanced level. Many improve their skills, confidence and attitudes to learning. Teachers raise students' aspirations successfully and the vast majority of students who wish to progress to higher education do so.
- Students enjoy learning and the level of attendance is usually high. However, in a few lessons, particularly GCSE mathematics and English, attendance levels are lower. Students feel extremely safe in the college and make a strong positive contribution to it and the wider community.

- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their lessons well with a good range of activities that students find enjoyable and interesting; students apply themselves very well. They develop a good range of skills, knowledge and understanding in lessons. The pace of most learning is brisk and teachers ensure that students work productively. In the less effective lessons, teaching and learning are not sufficiently personalised to meet the needs of all abilities. Resources are of high quality and teachers use information and learning technology well to promote teaching and learning.
- The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is outstanding. It offers a wide and increasing range of vocational and academic courses together with GCSE courses in English and mathematics. Courses have been added in response to the needs of partner schools, employers and students, for example by the introduction of courses in beauty therapy this year. Attendance rates in enrichment activities are high and students confirm that they benefit from them in many ways. Students continue to enjoy considerable sporting success at regional and national levels.
- The college has well-established and growing links with employers, which enhances its ability to provide high-quality vocational courses. The college has very productive links with partner schools, which ensure smooth transitions between schools and the college. Students often enjoy going back to their schools to act as mentors for Year 8 and 9 students.
- Guidance and support for students are outstanding. The college has maintained this high standard since the previous inspection. Initial advice is very good, which is reflected in the declining numbers of students who withdraw from or change their course during the year. Excellent guidance contributes to the increasing number of students who progress to higher education. A new tutorial model, largely in response to students' views, ensures that they receive at least one individual tutorial every three weeks. Tutors provide a clear focus on academic progress and the review of long- and short-term targets.
- Leadership and management are good. The Principal and his senior team provide very strong leadership. Governors, managers, staff and students share a strong sense of purpose and are ambitious for the future of the college. Communication across the college is very effective. Day-to-day management is efficient, resources are deployed well and financial management is extremely effective.
- Governors provide outstanding direction, challenge and support. They have a very good range of skills and an excellent grasp of the college's strengths and weaknesses.
- The college is a very cohesive and harmonious community, and equality and diversity are promoted very well. No specific group of students underperforms and achievement gaps between different groups have been closed.
- Quality assurance systems are satisfactory overall. Self-assessment processes rigorously identify strengths and areas for improvement. However, in a minority of areas, the resulting actions plans do not lead to consistent improvement. In a few cases, the lack of early analysis and intervention, results in inconsistent

trends in success. Lesson observations provide an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and good processes are in place to develop teachers' skills.

What does Wilberforce College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates in intermediate GCSE mathematics and English, by ensuring that teaching and learning are personalised to meet the needs of all students. Evaluate the reasons why attendance rates are lower on these courses and take action to improve them.
- Improve the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by ensuring that departmental managers and teachers have more opportunities to identify and share areas of best practice.
- Enhance the rigour and impact of the quality improvement system by ensuring that middle managers take a consistent approach to self-assessment and action planning. Ensure action plans are monitored to check that the desired improvements are taking place during the year. In some departments, a wider range of evidence should be used to judge the quality of provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- feeling valued as individuals
- subject teachers who go the extra mile to help them
- the excellent specialist and pastoral support they receive
- the very safe, friendly, adult environment
- the extremely enjoyable enrichment activities
- the effective way the college helps prepare them for their educational future
- the new, more focused tutorial arrangements
- taking part in charitable activities especially 'gunging' the Principal for *Children in Need*.

What students would like to see improved:

- the flexibility of courses and timetables
- the amount of free time they have between lessons, which is sometimes too much
- the limited food options and what they perceive as high prices of food
- the availability of new coffee shop facilities.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the well-organised work placements
- prompt communication with the college
- the standard of work produced by students
- the enthusiastic tutors
- the politeness of students
- the well-organised education fairs
- the informative disability awareness raising sessions.

What employers would like to see improved:

- on occasions the sufficiency of notice given by staff to prepare for visits by students to the workplace.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. The college is ambitious and has a good track record of improvement. A good or better standard of provision has been maintained. Strong leadership at a senior level ensures that most areas of underperformance are tackled robustly. Governance is excellent. Two of the three main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. Leaders move swiftly and effectively to respond to the needs of the local community. Financial management is strong and sensible investments are made in resources to improve outcomes for students. The management of curriculum areas has improved, although there is still a little inconsistency in the application of quality improvement processes. Self-assessment reports are broadly accurate but do not always use a comprehensive range of evidence. On occasions a minority of managers rely too heavily on end-of-year data to support quality improvement and the early identification of potential underperformance is not always evident. Teaching and learning are good and the observation system provides an accurate evaluation of the quality of individual lessons. However, information from lesson observations is not always collated and analysed to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in some areas. The college gives a high priority to students' views and uses them successfully to improve the quality of provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. The vast majority of students make good progress on advanced-level courses. The college uses a wide variety of measures to judge the progress students make in comparison to their results in GCSE examinations. Progress is good overall but, as the college recognises, it is not uniformly so across all courses.
9. On advanced-level vocational courses success rates have improved and are usually above the high national averages. On intermediate-level courses success rates are broadly in line with national averages although for students who complete their courses pass rates are usually very high.
10. Despite students' relatively low levels of prior attainment, pass and retention rates on A- and AS-level courses compare well with those found in similar institutions. College data indicate that success rates rose significantly in 2010/11, particularly at AS level. Retention rates have been high for the last three years and in 2009/10 rose to above average. Pass rates have been around the high national average for the last three years. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades at A level varies between subjects but is below average overall.

11. The college no longer offers key or functional skills and instead encourages all students who need to improve grades to take GCSE courses in English or mathematics. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C grades is low.
12. No significant differences exist between the performance of male and female students, students from different ethnic backgrounds or those in receipt of additional learning support. The success rate of the small number of older students, who in the main stay on at the college to complete advanced-level courses, is higher than those of students aged 16 to 18. The college has increased successfully the proportion of male students recruited from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It is too early to judge the progress of the new group of students aged 14 to 16; observations of lessons indicate that they have made a good start to learning.
13. Most students report that they enjoy learning. They are punctual and attendance rates on advanced-level courses and enrichment activities are high. This is particularly notable as many students have a history of lower than average attendance at their previous schools. The attendance rate in some classes is lower, particularly GCSE mathematics and English. A high proportion of students progress between levels and beyond to higher education.
14. Students say that they feel very safe. They develop a good understanding of the importance of healthy living. Students make a very good contribution to college life and the community through their work with the student council and many charitable activities. They are encouraged to be active citizens and are keen to become involved in issues such as ensuring that the college adopts a sustainable approach to resource management.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching and learning are good. Students enjoy lessons and work enthusiastically. Imaginative and challenging teaching enables students to make good progress. A good balance between collaborative activities and opportunities for personalised learning feature in the best lessons. For example, in a health and social care lesson, students developed a good understanding of the principles of confidentiality as a group and then applied this knowledge to individual projects. Students' knowledge and understanding is usually tested through good use of questions. For example, well-pitched questions in an English lesson about elements of post-feminism elicited some highly analytical responses. In a few lessons, learning is too teacher directed and questions are too general and do not lead to deeper thinking or debate.
16. The assessment of students' work is good. The intranet system plays an important part. Students like it and use it widely to receive guidance and chart their progress. Teachers monitor individuals' and groups' progress closely.

17. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is outstanding. A wide and increasing range of courses is offered across 13 subject areas. A large proportion of students choose a vocational course as their main programme of study. Flexible entry requirements encourage wider participation in education from under-represented groups within the community. The college is very responsive to specific needs, for example by offering a 'Preparing to Teach' course. It has developed a ground-breaking approach to meeting the needs of Year 10 pupils from a nearby school which is closing, by establishing a broad curriculum with comprehensive tutorial arrangements.
18. Students participate very widely in a range of enrichment activities. 'Fairs' have been established recently to cover topics such as entry to higher education, health and well-being, community awareness and financial management. Participation in work experience has grown in popularity over the last three years and in 2010/11 a high proportion of students were placed with employers.
19. Partnership arrangements are outstanding and of great benefit to students. The college helps to ensure a coherent approach to education and training in the city. Employers note that students are prepared well for placements and the world of work and that they are fully supported by college staff. Students benefit from the very good transition arrangements between school and college and from the many examples of curricular liaison between the college and schools.
20. The college provides outstanding care, guidance and support to students. Their needs are well met through a variety of learning support mechanisms. They receive expert specialist help with personal, financial and health matters. The progress of vulnerable students is monitored systematically and targeted intervention ensures that their learning is not interrupted. Initial assessments are carried out thoroughly. Most students in receipt of additional support make good progress. A large number of revision and study groups help students to reach their potential in examinations. Almost all of the students who receive support from the college's counsellors complete their course successfully.
21. Tutors provide effective one-to-one tutorials and are supported well by resources accessible via the college intranet. Students can access information about their own progress and be clear about what they need to do to improve. College staff now provide good impartial careers advice and guidance following the end of the post-16 Connexions service locally.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

22. The Principal and senior leaders provide good strategic leadership. They respond in an outstanding way to meet community needs and have established a strong strategic vision. Together with the staff, they have developed the college's ethos and values to promote high standards within an inclusive environment. The college has a clear ambition to become outstanding in everything it does.
23. Operational management is effective and the college runs very smoothly. A robust performance management system is in place that is closely linked to lesson observations and staff training. Staff receive good support through a range of effective professional development. Parents, carers, partners and students believe that the college is led and managed well.
24. Governance is outstanding. Governors are very knowledgeable and have a high level of expertise that enables them to carry out their duties effectively. They contribute very well to determining the strategic direction of the college. They have an excellent knowledge of the community and a good understanding of relevant changes affecting post-16 education. Governors provide appropriate and constructive support and robust challenge on a wide range of issues.
25. Arrangements to ensure that students are safeguarded are extremely secure and given a very high priority. Staff and governors have received appropriate training, so that they recognise their roles and responsibilities. The single central record of safeguarding checks on staff is comprehensive and meets government requirements. Audits and risk assessments carried out by the college show that the campus is a safe environment for students. Safeguarding matters are integrated well into the curriculum. Students have a highly developed awareness of the importance of good health and safety practices. The college demonstrates many good practices to ensure that a partnership approach is used to care for students' security and welfare. Great attention is paid to ensuring that vulnerable students are safeguarded. The college has had very few instances of bullying, and restorative practice is used to resolve any conflicts quickly and successfully.
26. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The college has appropriate policies and action plans to meet its duties in relation to equality. The range of programmes and entry criteria enable progression for students with lower attainment at school. Gaps in performance between groups of students have been tackled effectively and almost eradicated. New courses and styles of teaching have been introduced to meet the needs of male students and the gender imbalance has been redressed. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students are welcomed into the college community and fully supported. Incidents of harassment are very rare, but when they do happen they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Diversity and equality are promoted well in almost all areas of the curriculum.

27. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory overall. When applied rigorously they result in improvement. Judgements in the self-assessment report are largely accurate. However, the implementation of quality improvement processes is inconsistent in a minority of subject areas. Senior leaders take effective action to improve areas of underachievement, for example success rates on AS-level courses declined in 2009/10 but have improved this year. However, in most cases actions are taken as a result of disappointing end-of-year results, rather than as a result of monitoring during the course of the year.
28. Performance indicators in a minority of departments consist mainly of success rates compared to national averages, sometimes at the expense of other aspects; this was an issue at the last inspection. The internal lesson observation system accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement in individual lessons. However, a small number of middle managers do not analyse the overall quality of teaching and learning in their departments sufficiently well to identify common strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders take part in useful 'learning walks', review progress data and check students' files to monitor the quality and effectiveness of provision. Professional development through the sharing of effective practice within and between departments is increasing and beginning to have a good impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
29. The college engages very effectively with students in order to bring about improvements. Students express their opinions through a variety of mechanisms including surveys and the student council. Many improvements have been made in response to feedback, including changes to the tutorial system. 'Tag Clouds', an innovative way for students to give feedback on the quality of teaching, has encouraged teachers to reflect on and improve their practice. Students are represented on the governing body and are involved in the appointment of teachers. The college works hard to use employers' feedback to develop a highly responsive curriculum. The college's dialogue with other external partners is excellent.
30. The college provides good value for money. Outcomes for students are good. The college provides a pleasant learning environment on a site that has been improved considerably. It manages its finances very well. This enables it to improve the quality of resources continually for the benefit of students. The college deploys resources very effectively and pays good attention to aspects of sustainability.

Subject areas

Science

Grade 3

Context

31. At the time of the inspection 370 learners were studying science courses; the vast majority were aged 16 to 18 on full-time advanced-level courses. At intermediate level, GCSE science is offered to students aged 14 to 16 as well as to a small number of students over the age of 16. Advanced-level courses at AS and A level are available in biology, chemistry and physics. The department also offers a BTEC national diploma in animal care and a BTEC certificate in horse management; these were not looked at in detail as part of the inspection.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Success rates are high on A-level courses. Success rates in chemistry and physics are outstanding and those in biology are good. Most learners pass with at least the grades expected from consideration of their prior attainment. Many students exceed their predicted grades on A-level physics and chemistry.
- The proportion of students who pass AS-level biology and chemistry is below the high national average. In physics, the proportion of learners who pass has declined from above to around the national average. In all three subjects, most of those who pass make good progress given their entry qualifications. Too few students progress from the AS level to the equivalent A-level subject.
- Achievement in GCSE science is satisfactory. In 2011, virtually all learners who started the course passed, but the proportion achieving A* to C grades fell from significantly above the national average to around the national average.
- Students enjoy their studies. They feel very safe in the college and when working in laboratories. They work well in teams and develop good collaborative skills. The standard of students' work varies but is always satisfactory and sometimes good.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons include a wide range of practical experiments to sustain interest and motivate learners. Information technology is used effectively to support learning. In a few instances teachers do not encourage sufficient participation of students, or provide enough checks on learning or activities to meet the needs of all students. The virtual learning environment is used effectively by students and staff to complement and reinforce learning.
- Staff assess students' progress frequently, and recognise the previously poor assessment and monitoring on AS-level courses. The new departmental manager has tackled this, but it is too early to judge the impact of the strategies that have been implemented. Students' marks are translated to performance grades twice each term and students and their parents can access

these grades via the internet. In addition, parents receive four progress reports each year.

- Students benefit from a broad range of advanced-level courses which provide opportunities to progress to higher education. A large proportion progress from A level to relevant higher-education courses. Students enjoy a wide range of science-based enrichment activities including trips, talks from visiting speakers, science competitions and fieldwork. In addition, many students attend the extensive cross-college enrichment programme.
- The department has good partnerships with local secondary schools. Students aiming to study medicine benefit particularly from partnerships with the medical schools of the Universities of Hull and York. A wide range of employers work effectively with the science department.
- Students receive good support. Teachers give their time freely to provide them with additional assistance. Additional learning support is provided effectively to students with specific learning needs. Students make good use of study support sessions for revision and reinforcement of learning in mathematics or English or to develop wider research skills.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department has been restructured recently. Although it is too early to evaluate the impact of this change, there are signs of improvement in some areas. Communication within and between the three science subjects is effective.
- The self-assessment system is not used as well as it could be. The report contains broadly accurate judgements on success rates, but does not have sufficient focus on the current quality of learning. It does not yet ensure consistency or drive a trend of improvement across all subjects and levels. The department has good resources which are utilised well and benefits from particularly good technical support.

What does Wilberforce Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Fully implement the proposed new strategies in assessment for learning and monitoring of progress on AS-level subjects, with the aim of improving success rates consistently and reducing the year-on-year variations.
- Analyse the reasons for, and improve, the declining A* to C pass rate in GCSE science so that it again exceeds the national average for similar colleges. Extend the use of personalised approaches to teaching and learning to meet all students' needs.
- Improve the impact of the quality assurance system by making it a more rigorous and useful process by: introducing milestone targets; involving all staff; and focusing on improving all aspects of teaching and learning rather than looking exclusively at the end of year achievement rates of students.

Mathematics and statistics

Grade 2

Context

32. Around 600 students are enrolled on mathematics courses; about half of these are female. Almost all are aged 16 to 18. The college offers AS- and A-level mathematics and further mathematics and three GCSE courses for students who have not attained grade A* to C in mathematics at school.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. On all advanced-level courses success rates are high. In 2011, AS-level mathematics students made outstanding progress in relation to their prior attainment. In A-level mathematics, students' progress has improved year on year and is now good. In lessons, students demonstrate good mathematical knowledge and skills, especially in algebra.
- Most students retaking GCSE do not achieve high grades. Success rates are declining. Currently less than a half of students starting with a grade D succeed in achieving grade A* to C. For students starting with a grade E or lower more than half improve their grade but few reach grades A* to C. The attendance rate in GCSE classes is much lower than in advanced lessons.
- Students' economic well-being is enhanced by their high success rates on advanced-level mathematics; this is particularly true for students with low entry grades. Progression rates to higher education are high.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good or better on advanced-level courses. Lessons are well planned, with many imaginative activities that engage students. In several lessons there was particularly effective group work, for example a matching cards exercise in the teaching of differentiation in calculus. Teachers use interactive smart boards effectively, for example to explain the use of a scientific calculator to calculate the roots of a quadratic equation.
- In weaker lessons, teachers do not use sufficiently effective strategies to meet the needs of students of all abilities. In GCSE mathematics some use too much whole class teaching which does not match the range of students' needs.
- Assessment is good on advanced-level courses. Assessment booklets provide a sound framework which emphasises continuous feedback and gives students a valuable record of their progress. This in turn informs where student support is needed. On GCSE courses, assessment is adequate but not as well organised or effective in promoting progress.
- An appropriate range of mathematics courses is offered to meet students' needs. The college is particularly keen to offer a second chance to students who have previously been unsuccessful in the development of mathematical skills at school.
- Students receive outstanding support on advanced-level courses. Timely and thorough assessment informs tutorial, departmental and additional learning

support. The extensive range of support and revision classes that teachers provide within and outside college time is exceptional. Pastoral support for GCSE students is also good but less effective because assessment is less well structured.

- Leadership and management in mathematics are good. Staff closely monitor all aspects of the department and share a strong drive for the highest levels of success. Self-assessment is accurate and realistic. It leads to focused improvement plans which involve all members of the department. Teachers have clear improvement targets but with insufficient emphasis on how teaching and learning are to be improved even further, for example in GCSE mathematics.
- Arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity are excellent. The college analyses results by ethnicity and gender. Data show only slight differences in the performance of different groups. The department takes care in its publicity materials and open days to make mathematics equally appealing to male and female students.

What does Wilberforce Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on GCSE courses by: improving assessment to better identify students' needs; adapting learning activities to match better the range of students' ability, understanding and skill; providing more vocationally relevant materials to help students from different subject areas to understand the importance of mathematics and attend more frequently.
- Introducing a more personalised learning approach which gives students more opportunity to work at a pace that is appropriate for them. Reticent students should be encouraged to contribute more by the use of targeted questioning.
- Place more emphasis on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in self-assessment and performance management, with both individual targets and departmental targets set and monitored throughout the year.

Information and communication technology

Grade 3

Context

33. The college offers a range of full-time vocational and academic courses in information and communication technology (ICT) from intermediate to advanced level. The majority of students study advanced-level courses. At the time of the inspection there were 195 students of whom the vast majority were males aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory but vary between courses. For example, students achieve particularly well on advanced vocational courses. However, success rates for the first diploma course are declining and were low in 2010/11. Pass rates for AS- and A-level courses in ICT are satisfactory but at AS level are declining. The college has introduced a new advanced-level vocational qualification successfully, and there are signs of improvement in success rates.
- Most students make at least satisfactory progress in comparison with their prior attainment and in some advanced vocational courses progress is good. Students' information technology skills and knowledge are developed well in lessons through the use of scenario-based activities.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the better lessons teachers engage students in learning and students make good progress through the use of a range of interesting practical activities. Students assess what they have learned and are clear about what they need to do to improve. Teachers use starter activities as students enter the classroom to engage them and reinforce previous learning. For example, in one lesson the teacher used an interactive computer game which worked effectively to engage all students' interest. However, in some lessons teachers' questions do not always stretch and challenge students.
- The assessment of students' work is good. Tutors return work promptly and the feedback helps students to improve their grades. However, spelling and punctuation are not always corrected in students' written work to help them to develop their literacy skills. The virtual learning environment is used effectively for communicating and engaging students in activities to reinforce learning and deepen understanding.
- The range of provision is good and meets the needs and interests of students. They have the opportunity to study both academic and vocational qualifications. Students take advantage of a wide range of activities offered across the college, for example enrichment and careers fairs which are held on a regular basis.
- The subject area makes good and improving use of a range of partnerships to develop the information technology provision. Students often make visits to local higher-education institutions and local businesses to look at ICT systems in industry and to help them develop their workplace skills. The area also invites local information technology companies as guest speakers for students.

- Support and guidance for students are effective. Students who are identified for study support receive effective help to improve their results.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course teams have participated in peer observations to share good practice across the area and teachers have been supported to improve their effectiveness in lessons. However, some areas for improvement identified in 2009/10 declined further in 2010/11.
- Self-assessment is not sufficiently focused on identifying what actions need to be taken to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching. New strategies are in place to bring about improvement this year. However, it is too early to see their impact.
- Action taken to promote equality and diversity has been effective. Good progress has been made this year in increasing the number of females in the area. Visits to a girls' school to promote provision and an after-school computing club for girls have had a particularly positive impact. Assignments and activities developed by staff raise students' awareness of diversity in disability, gender and ethnicity.

What does Wilberforce Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Reverse the decline in success rates on some courses by focusing on the consistent improvement of teaching and learning. Extend the sharing of good practice within the departments and on a wider basis.
- Ensure that the self-assessment system is rigorous and applied robustly to all aspects of provision rather than the simple analysis of success rates. Identify more swiftly, areas where targeted intervention is needed during the year, to prevent underperformance.

English

Grade 2

Context

34. Currently, just over 360 students are enrolled on advanced-level courses in AS- and A-level English language, English literature, and English language and literature. Around 350 students are enrolled on GCSE English. This latter group includes a small group of students aged 14 to 16 who have recently enrolled at the college. Just over half of students are female and the vast majority are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates at AS and A level are broadly in line with the high national averages, with the exception of AS English language and literature, which is below. Pass rates at A level have been consistently outstanding for the last three years. After a decline in 2009/2010, success rates on AS English literature improved significantly. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in GCSE English fell significantly to below the national average in 2010/11.
- On all AS- and A-level English courses, students make good or better progress in relation to their prior attainment. In A-level English language, progress in relation to prior attainment is excellent. A high proportion of students on English courses continue to study English-related degrees in higher education. However, too few students continue from AS to A2 in English literature.
- Students clearly enjoy their lessons and participate fully in class. Attendance levels are high on advanced-level courses but lower in GCSE English classes. The standard of the students' oral skills is high in many advanced-level lessons but their written skills are sometimes underdeveloped. In GCSE English lessons, the standard of written work is often below what would be expected at this level of study.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, teachers use a good variety of activities to sustain students' interest. For example, in an A-level English language lesson, a video clip of Bill Bailey's *Ye olde pubbe gagge* was used effectively to analyse Middle English syntax. In an AS English language and literature lesson, a particularly impressive discussion took place about Carol Ann Duffy's poem, *Small female skull*, where students demonstrated creativity in their thoughts and ideas. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not use questions consistently to elicit developed and detailed responses from students.
- Assessment practices are usually good. Students know and understand their targets well and productive progress reviews take place regularly. Teachers mark work promptly and many students receive useful feedback to support improvement but this is inconsistent across the department. For some GCSE students, written guidance about how they can improve their work lacks precision. Technical errors in spelling and punctuation are not sufficiently identified and corrected in writing tasks.

- The range of provision is good and there is a wide range of enrichment opportunities in the English department. Subject-specific activities enhance students' enjoyment of their subjects. Theatre trips, creative writing classes, guest lectures, library visits and a chance to assist in the production of the college magazine, 'Vox', are received and attended well by the students.
- Care, guidance and support for students on advanced-level courses are excellent. Students value the 'open door' access they have to English teachers and appreciate the support they receive. Students have positive relationships with teachers which results in them being highly confident and proactive in seeking clarification or further help when necessary. Students also value the range of revision sessions on offer in college, after college and in the holidays. Participation and attendance at these sessions are good.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategies to rectify the decline in outcomes in AS English literature in 2010 have worked well and resulted in significant improvements for 2011. A new head of department and second in department are in place this academic year and are aware of the strengths and areas for development, articulating good ideas for improvement and establishing a strong culture of teamwork.
- The self-assessment report does not focus in sufficient detail on teaching and learning and understates areas for improvement, particularly in GCSE classes.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well. Students feel respected and treated fairly, recognising that teachers are prepared to challenge any intolerance, should it arise. Teachers seek opportunities in lessons to discuss equality issues and both literary and non-literary texts are chosen with gender and race issues in mind. A good example of this is the choice of the male-authored text *About a boy* to engage the large proportion of male students in GCSE English.

What does Wilberforce Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- Raise A* to C achievement rates and progress in GCSE English by re-evaluating the standard of work being set and the way in which basic skills in literacy are being developed both in and out of lessons. Examine the reasons for lower attendance rates in these lessons.
- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring greater consistency in the use of questions to encourage and develop more detailed student responses.
- Ensure that self-assessment is detailed and robust in accurately identifying teaching and learning issues and that action plans are rigorous enough to bring about improvements in students' learning throughout the year.

Information about the inspection

35. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six 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 Young People's Learning Agency, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's survey inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.

36. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Wilberforce Sixth Form 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
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	1,636	1,544	45
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	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?	1		
How safe do learners feel?	1		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1		
Quality of provision	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?	1		
Leadership and management	2		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2		
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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