

# Northbrook College

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130842

**Name of lead inspector:** Richard Beaumont HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 1 June 2012

**Type of provider:** General further education college

**Address:** Littlehampton Road  
Worthing  
West Sussex  
BN12 6NU

**Telephone number:** 01903 606060

## Information about the provider

1. Northbrook College is a medium-sized general further education college that serves the area in and around Worthing in West Sussex. The college operates from three main campuses, two in Worthing and one at Shoreham Airport. In December 2011, the college took control of phase one of a three-phase build programme at its Broadwater campus. The college is funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).
2. The college offers courses in all subject sectors. The largest of these are: arts, media and publishing; preparation for life and work; engineering; and health and social and childcare. Northbrook College provides higher education provision to around 1,000 students, most of whom study art and design. The college works with a broad range of training providers and employers to deliver apprenticeship training. The college offers training in number of community-based centres, particularly for adult and community learning provision and provides vocational training to pupils from a number of local schools.
3. In 2010/11, around half of all students were enrolled on to full-time provision. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18 years. Enrolments on to part-time provision is mainly made up of adult students. Approximately equal numbers of males and females are recruited, with just over 7% of students coming from an ethnic minority group.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
  - Career Training Services Ltd (health, social and children's care; learning and support; cleaning and support services; business administration; customer service; sports and recreation)
  - Academy Training Group Ltd (construction)
  - Campus (Grosvenor) Training (business administration; teaching support; team leading; food manufacture; warehousing and storage)
  - Tempus Training (ICT; business administration; health and social care; supporting teaching and learning)
  - Asphaleia (young people not in education, employment or training)
  - Cornerstones (sustainable resource management).

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11</b>
<p><b>Provision for young learners:</b> 14 to 16</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> <p>Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment</p>	<p>404 part-time learners</p> <p>60 part-time learners 1,456 full-time learners</p> <p>16 part-time learners 0 learners</p>
<p><b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)</p>	<p>360 full-time learners 1,680 part-time learners</p>
<p><b>Employer provision:</b> NVQs in the workplace Apprenticeships</p>	<p>1,909 learners 390 apprentices</p>
<p><b>Adult and community learning</b></p>	<p>886 learners</p>

## Summary report

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

<b>Subject Areas</b>	
Health, social care and child development and well being	2
Engineering	3
Arts, media and publishing	2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL (English for speakers of other language)	3

## Overall effectiveness

- Northbrook College is a satisfactory college with satisfactory capacity to improve. Over the last two years all aspects of the provision have improved significantly. Success rates for full-time students improved in 2010/11, although they remained below the national average. Retention rates in 2011/12 have continued to see significant improvement, along with the rigour of monitoring student progress. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are high.
- Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are good. The range of provision offered by the college has developed well to better meet the needs of the broader local community. Partnership working is good. Students benefit from good support, and the monitoring of their progress is robust.

7. College leaders have had considerable success in developing a culture at the college that is focused on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. The college's ambitious strategic priorities are both understood and fully supported by all staff. Self-assessment is critical and leads to the setting of challenging targets that are closely monitored at all levels of the organisation. Equality and diversity arrangements are particularly effective. Arrangements for the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults are both comprehensive and thorough.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Apprenticeship success rates are high and improving. Success rates for college-based students in 2010/11 were too low. However, in 2011/12, the college has been successful in significantly reducing the number of students withdrawing before the end of their courses. Learners' make good progress in lessons. Progression rates to higher level courses and employment for students at college are satisfactory.
- Most students are well motivated and enjoy the safe college environment. They develop good personal, social and economic skills and become more self-confident and motivated. The standard of students' work is at least satisfactory and good in many cases.
- Teaching and learning are good. Many teachers use imaginative activities to enthuse students to ensure that learning is effective. Lively lessons and a good rapport between tutors and students create a good learning environment. In a few lessons, the limited range of activities fails to inspire students and they quickly become bored. Good learning resources are generally used in a satisfactory way to enhance learning.
- Most students are highly satisfied with the teaching and learning, but less so about course organisation. The assessment of students is effective with generally well-designed assignments. Critical feedback on how students can improve their performance is timely but varies from really helpful to limited.
- The college offers a broad range of provision, with good progression routes, and has developed its provision to meet the needs of a wide section of the local community. With high levels of satisfaction from students and employers, the college has a flexible approach to planning the curriculum. Cross-college enrichment activities are good, although access to extra-curricular activities to develop students' understanding of the world of work varies too much.
- Links with a wide range of partners to develop the college's influence in shaping provision in the local community are good. Students benefit from the numerous social agency partners that provide aspects of the tutorial programme effectively.
- Care, guidance and support for students are good. The college is effective in placing students onto the most appropriate course. Support for students with additional needs is good. Support provided in lessons is generally good. The college identifies effectively students at risk of withdrawal and the introduction

of pastoral and learning mentors has been particularly effective at retaining many students on programme.

- Overall, tutorials are planned well with examples of excellent practice. As recognised by the college, the setting of targets to support all students to make better progress is not sufficiently well established.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers have brought about significant improvements to the quality of provision through an energetic and practical approach to tackling previously weaker aspects of college performance. With staff, they have developed robust new systems to set realistic targets, monitor progress and implement action plans. The governing body is led well and has a considerable depth of experience.
- The college safeguards young students and vulnerable adults well and students across the three college sites feel safe. Staff are well trained and senior managers take an active role in monitoring the college's safeguarding responsibilities.
- Equality and diversity are good and are particularly strong aspects of the college's work. Narrowing gaps in performance is a key focus for the college and it has been very successful in raising success rates for particular groups of students. The promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is good.
- Self-assessment is accurate and realistic in identifying strengths and areas that require improvement. Quarterly performance reviews and reliable data have ensured a more consistent quality across all aspects of the college's work and a very rapid improvement in performance. However, some course reviews are insufficiently rigorous and the sharing of good practice is under developed.

### **What does Northbrook College need to do to improve further?**

- Further improve success rates through continued and effective monitoring and early intervention to support even more students to complete their courses successfully.
- Ensure that learning in poorer performing areas is improved by better course organisation, more lively teaching, better use of information and learning technology and a continuing focus on improving the performance of satisfactory teachers.
- Improve the opportunities for all students to experience extra-curricular enrichment activities that invigorate the learning experience and extend their understanding of the world of work.
- Further improve the setting of performance targets for students to ensure that they are specific, realistic and actively engage students to improve and take greater control of their progress.
- Improve the rigour of course reviews to ensure that all targets more accurately reflect current and previous performance and that actions incorporate all of the areas of development identified.

- Further develop the sharing of best practice across, and within, curriculum areas to reduce variability and improve the student experience.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What learners like:**

- supportive and helpful teachers, tutors and learning support assistants
- enrichment activities, particularly those linked directly with courses
- teachers who have industry experience which is well used to help improve learning
- the college counselling and support facilities
- good resources in many areas of the college
- the friendly learning environment.

#### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- the organisation of some courses, including the planning of assessments and management of resources
- the limited extra-curricular activities to improve subject knowledge
- timetables with long periods between lessons.

### **Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What employers like:**

- the close and professional working relationship
- support for their staff from experienced trainers and assessors
- the range of general and specific courses available
- prompt responses to problems or enquiries
- impartial advice on sources of funding or training.

#### **What employers would like to see improved:**

- the schedule of assessments to improve the planning of training.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 3**

8. The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The college has a clear strategic vision and this is understood well by all staff. The college has made significant progress to rectify all of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and several of these are now strengths. The college's headline success rates increased notably in 2010/11 from a low base but remain below those of other general further education colleges. Performance within curriculum areas varied considerably and only a small number has shown a consistent trend of improvement over the last two full years. However, the trend of overall improvement has continued in 2011/12 through much improved retention rates.
9. Governors use their expertise well to challenge senior managers and to raise standards. Staff are committed to improvement and have confidence in the ability of the college's leaders. Self-assessment is ongoing throughout the year and has a strong focus on improving students' outcomes and other key aspects of the provision. This process has been largely successful in 2011/12, but was slow to have an impact in all curriculum areas in 2010/11. Insufficient sharing of good practice remains a key area for development as identified in the latest self-assessment report.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 3**

10. Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Foundation adult learner responsive and apprenticeship success rates have been consistently high. In 2010/11, long course success rates improved well, but overall were still below the national average for similar colleges. Foundation and intermediate success rates for 16- to 18-year-olds have been consistently low. In 2011/12, retention rates have continued to improve significantly and, based upon the close monitoring of student progress, inspectors view that success rates could again significantly increase.
11. Progression rates for 14- to 16-year-old pupils on part-time college courses to full-time courses is very high. Students make good progress in lessons and progression rates from foundation to higher levels are satisfactory. Any success rate variations by minority groups are quickly and effectively remedied. Attendance and punctuality are monitored rigorously and have steadily improved to be at least satisfactory.
12. The personal development of students is good and they make a significant growth in their capacity for social and economic well-being. The standard of students' work is at least satisfactory and is good in many areas. Students display improved levels of confidence and motivation. For example, art students quickly learn independent creative design skills to a very high standard. The



vast majority of students enjoy their time at college and the safe college environment.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

13. Teaching and learning are good. In many lessons, teachers and students work productively and collaboratively on a range of stimulating activities that extend knowledge and skills well. For example, students on fashion courses are fearless in terms of experimentation and the use of mixed media. In a lively and industrious travel-based class, students carried out a role-play exercise followed by effective web-based research that led to professional presentations on aspects of good customer service. Expert in-class support and good learning resources enhance learning in many areas. Learning support assistants generally provide a very effective service to students and staff. However, a minority of lessons rely too much on a tutor-led introduction, with a limited range of exciting learning activities and insufficient planning to meet individual student needs.
14. Rigorous assessment aids learning effectively with well-designed assignments. Constructive and critical reviews, in areas such as theatre studies, really help students understand what they need to do to improve. Feedback to students and, where appropriate, parents or others is usually given in a timely fashion. However, in a small number of courses, such as electrical installation or aeronautical engineering, the organisation of assessment and other aspects of course administration is less than effective, leading to undue stress and rushed work by students. The college has recognised that generally high student satisfaction levels of teaching and learning are not always matched by similar satisfaction with course organisation.
15. Staff are appropriately qualified and in many areas teachers use their extensive current expertise to enhance learning and make it relevant to employment. Some teachers use computers imaginatively, but overall, satisfactory use is made of information and learning technology. The college's virtual learning environment is used well for routine matters but varies in the availability of good curriculum content.
16. The college promotes improvements in teaching and learning particularly well. A much invigorated and rigorous staff lesson observation and development system is driving up standards. In the majority of college internal lesson observation records, learning is carefully analysed, with constructive comments leading to relevant areas for improvement and development plans. This work is helping with the sharing of good practice, although some areas of poorer performance continue. There was much correlation between college and inspection observation findings.
17. The needs of students and employers are well met with a broad range of provision across all subject areas from entry to advanced level, leading to some higher level courses. Progression routes are well planned. Over recent years,

the college has further improved its ability to meet local needs through the introduction of more courses at foundation and intermediate level and work-based learning. The college offers good provision for 14- to 16-year-old pupils and those not in education, employment or training. Engagement with employers is good and they speak highly of the college's flexible working arrangements to support their needs.

18. Enrichment opportunities are good with a wide range of activities with high student participation. Overall, arrangements to extend the students' experiences are satisfactory. For example, curriculum extension activities, work experience and curriculum partnerships in some subject areas are very good. However, opportunities vary too much within, and between, programme areas.
19. The college works particularly effectively with a broad range of partners to develop provision and share resources. The college is influential in shaping the local 14 to 19, adult and employer skills strategies. For example, it provides courses for members of the community who may not otherwise have access to learning opportunities and has links with a local special school to develop improved transition arrangements. Effective links with local agencies are used well to inform students on issues such as personal safety, sexual health and driving skills.
20. Overall, care, guidance and support for students are good. Pre-course advice and guidance are comprehensive and the extensive induction programme is used well to ensure students are on the most appropriate course. Initial assessment has much improved and now leads to good and timely support for those students with additional learning needs. Communication is good between support staff and teachers and generally ensures that students' progress is monitored well.
21. Arrangements to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good, with the clear aim of students developing greater independence. The college is particularly effective at supporting those students at risk of withdrawing before completing their courses.
22. Overall, group and individual tutorial support is good. It is well planned and, generally, students respond well. In a few cases, tutorials lack rigour and focus and fail to sufficiently motivate students to achieve well. Pastoral and learning mentors offer students an alternative means of support and they are highly regarded by students. Overall, for too many students, the setting of targets at progress reviews is not sufficiently specific, measurable or realistic.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

23. Leadership and management are good. Senior managers, supported well by governors, have involved staff fully in developing a successful new vision and culture for the college. Comprehensive strategic plans are closely aligned with meeting the needs of the local community through a strong focus on developing vocational and employment-based provision. The Principal has

simplified management structures, improved accountability, and provided clear leadership and management. Management teams within the college are cohesive and have confidence in the abilities of senior leaders. The new campus for students aged 14 to 19 has significantly improved student morale and increased the visibility of the college in the local community.

24. The drive to raise standards and improve the quality of provision has gathered momentum over the last two years, particularly so in 2011/12. Managers have implemented a range of improvement actions in the past year with, in most cases, considerable success. In particular, they have taken prompt action to improve retention that is now high. Senior managers have increased the frequency and rigour of their monitoring of performance and taken prompt and decisive actions to quicken the pace of improvement. Challenging targets that are monitored regularly are now in place for all departments in the college. The management of work-based learning subcontractors is good.
25. Governors are experienced and use their skills well. The governing body is characterised by strong leadership, clear continuity and well managed succession planning. Expertise in curriculum, safeguarding and equality and diversity is particularly strong within the governing body and is used well to scrutinise performance closely. Governors' disappointment with some aspects of the college's performance in the past has led to much more challenging and robust discussions this year. Governors have contributed significantly to managers arriving at a largely accurate and realistic evaluation of the college's work. Governors promote equality and diversity and safeguarding well, in addition to making sure that the college meets its legislative requirements. However, the self-assessment of governance is insufficiently rigorous.
26. The college safeguards young students and vulnerable adults well and learners feel safe. A named child protection officer is situated at each of the college's sites. Staff are well trained and those with specific safeguarding responsibilities have developed a high level of expertise and good links with external agencies. E-safety is promoted well. The significant number of students in public care who attend the college achieve successfully and progress well to other courses and employment.
27. The promotion of equality and diversity is a particularly strong area of the college's work. Published equalities objectives clearly reflect the college's priorities with regard to narrowing achievement gaps. These differences in performance are analysed in detail and pursued relentlessly to the point where certain groups of students who were underperforming previously now achieve better than their peers and national averages. The good access for students with restricted mobility at the Broadwater campus is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. The proportion of enrolments from minority ethnic heritage groups is higher than in the local population as a whole. The promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum is good.
28. Students' and employers' views are used appropriately to promote improvement and all courses have learner representatives. Students get involved in various

influential focus groups and campus committees and give feedback in a range of ways. The college responds well to suggestions on how to improve and has taken significant actions to enhance students' experiences on a number of occasions. However, the response rates to employer surveys are low and the views of students are not always used to bring about improvements through course reviews.

29. The college self-assessment process is realistic and accurate and has been improved further with quarterly performance reviews that focus strongly on improving student outcomes. The monitoring of departmental performance is regular, rigorous, and based on reliable and easily accessible data. Senior managers promote a culture of swift and effective intervention. The sharing of good practice has improved through whole-college conferences, curriculum forums, and more frequent staff meetings, but is yet to have a significant impact on a few parts of the provision. Some course reviews do not have sufficiently clear action plans to take forward the identified areas for development.
30. The college provides good value for money. Financial management is good and resources are managed well. Improving outcomes for students are increasing the value for money achieved in the curriculum areas.

## Subject areas

### Health, social care and child development and well-being

Grade 2

#### Context

31. At the time of the inspection, 745 students were enrolled on care and childcare programmes. Of these, 624 students were completing health and social care or children and young people's workforce diplomas in the workplace, of whom, 461 were apprentices. Full-time childcare courses are offered from entry to advanced levels, with 67 students enrolled. Some 54 students were following an access course leading to higher education programmes in the health professions. Short courses are also offered to meet the needs of employers, including safe handling of medicines, dementia care, infection control and equality and diversity.

#### Key findings

- Overall, outcomes for students are good. The success rates for apprentices and students completing National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes within the planned timescale are significantly above national averages. Success rates and progression to higher education are good on access programmes. Success rates on the full-time intermediate and advanced level programmes in childcare are satisfactory.
- Progress and attendance rates for 2011/12 are good. The standard of students' work in lessons is high. Students contribute with confidence to class discussions and have a good recall of previous learning. Student portfolios on work-based learning programmes are well presented.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a wide range of well-chosen interactive teaching and learning activities in lessons. Students work hard in lessons. Students who have previously had poor experiences of formal education are impressively engaged in classroom activities. Teachers effectively draw on their wide-ranging industry experience to link theory to vocational practice.
- The use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support learning is satisfactory. For students attending the college, the use of well-chosen video clips and PowerPoint slides are good and the use by some teachers of the virtual learning environment (VLE) is very effective, but it is underused by others. The use of ILT in the delivery of work-based learning is under developed.
- Assessment is good. Work-based assessors effectively liaise with students to ensure they maximise the opportunities to observe students at work. Employers enjoy working with the college, although they are not always sufficiently aware of the topics covered in off-the-job training sessions. Feedback on written work

is comprehensive, detailed, and constructive and gives clear guidance for improvement.

- The setting of targets at progress reviews is too varied. Some targets are detailed, specific and clear. However, others are too vague and not sufficiently measurable, for example 'continue with NVQ work' or 'complete college work'.
- The range of provision is good and directly relates to well-documented areas of skills shortage. Full-time provision provides a very good preparation for entry into childcare services. Apprenticeship programmes and short course provision is very responsive to the needs of employers.
- Students benefit from a wide range of effective partnerships in their vocational sectors. The links with the care and early years sector in West Sussex are extensive. Well-developed and productive links with regional universities ensure good progression from access courses.
- Support for students is good. Teachers and tutors provide good pastoral and academic support. Effective links with internal and external agencies ensure students continue on programme whilst in receipt of specialist additional support. Work placement providers and employers work productively with the college to support work-based students.
- Leadership and management are good. The strengths, as identified in the previous inspection, have been maintained. Management has a clear and critical view of the quality of provision and action plans for improvement are comprehensive. The monitoring of students' progress is thorough. Arrangements to quality-assure work-based subcontractors are robust.
- Overall, the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. During lessons, teachers and students demonstrate good understanding and how it effectively applies to the work environment. However, the review of work-based students' understanding is brief and at times superficial.

### **What does Northbrook College need to do to improve further?**

- Significantly improve the effective use of ILT in all aspects of training to enliven learning and develop students' skills further.
- Improve the use of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited targets for students to actively develop their skills and plan effectively for their future progression.
- Ensure that work-based and off-the-job training is carefully planned to maximise learning and involve employers more fully in the delivery of training.

## Engineering

## Grade 3

### Context

32. The college offers an extensive range of full- and part-time courses, apprenticeships and NVQ only programmes across the two sites at Worthing and Shoreham Airport. Courses are offered from foundation to foundation degree level and include aeronautical, mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering, vehicle maintenance, motor sport and motor cycle engineering. Of the 450 college-based students, 236 are aged 16- to 18-years-old and 163 are adult students. A further 51 school-based students are aged 14 to 16. There are 130 apprentices enrolled on electrical installation and engineering programmes.

### Key findings

- In 2010/11, success rates on many programmes were low, particularly at intermediate and advanced levels in engineering and foundation and intermediate levels in motor vehicle. Retention rates have been low at all levels, but improvements in 2011/12 retention rates are significant, particularly in automotive programmes. In 2010/11, apprenticeship success rates were slightly below the national average, but steadily improving.
- Students enjoy their programmes, progress well and most are enthusiastic about their chosen course. Students develop good vocational skills and the standard of work produced in practical sessions is frequently good, and often exceeds the course requirements. Students take considerable pride in their work and demonstrate increased levels of confidence in practical activities.
- Students feel safe in the college and speak highly of the friendly and welcoming environment. There is an appropriate focus on the development of safe working practices both in college workshops and in the workplace. Students speak with confidence about safety and feel able to challenge unsafe practices.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory with significant improvements introduced in the current year. The better sessions are characterised by detailed planning and preparation, with highly effective checks on learning and a range of activities that enable students to progressively develop their understanding and competence. Some teachers use innovative activities to inspire students and add pace and challenge to the sessions.
- Theory teaching is often less effective. A limited range of activities and strategies are used to interest and enthuse students. Sessions often start well with good explanations of concepts. However, too often students become bored and lose motivation. Too little use is made of well-directed questioning to ensure that all students' knowledge and understanding are explored and there are insufficient extension opportunities for more able students.
- Overall, assessment is satisfactory. Students on full-time courses are mostly well prepared for assessments, although some poor assessment planning results in a backlog of work to complete. Students receive clear, detailed and constructive feedback on their practical performance. However, feedback on

written work is less well developed and, at times, is cursory and does not always correct poor grammar and spelling.

- Assessment of work-based electrical installation apprentices is weak. Opportunities for the collection of evidence towards the NVQ are frequently missed. Evidence is not gathered until most of the technical certificate is completed, for example students being introduced to the requirements of completing a portfolio of evidence who have already undertaking large amounts of the work in the workplace.
- The range of programmes meets the needs of students and employers very well. Progression routes are well planned from school link programmes through to advanced level and then on to sustained employment and/or higher education. The range of enrichment activities are good in motor sport and significantly enhance the students' experience. However, similar activities are not available for other areas of engineering.
- The college makes good use of partnerships to enhance the student experience. Well established and effective links with 12 local schools provide a broad range of courses available to pupils. Effective collaboration with major national and international employers helps to support apprentices and provide work experience for full-time students. Workplace assessors form very effective working relationships with employers who value the contribution the training adds to their business.
- Pre-course advice and careers guidance are appropriate. Early diagnosis of additional learning needs ensures that students receive appropriate support in lessons. Students with illness and personal problems are particularly well supported, with staff adjusting timetables and assignment activity to enable them to continue and succeed. Students value the support they receive and recognise its contribution to improving their achievements.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has been slow to improve aspects of provision. However, recent appointments have made significant progress to rectify poor retention and improve teaching and learning. Staff have a very clear understanding of the expectations and targets for improvement and now use data effectively to monitor the performance of all students. Staff teams work well together to improve the quality of provision.
- Overall, the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Work-based students have a good understanding of equality and diversity and this is reinforced well at progress reviews. However, lesson planning frequently lacks identification of opportunities to highlight aspects of equality and diversity. Female engineering teachers provide good role models.
- Staff meet regularly and use performance data effectively to identify areas for improvement and develop appropriate actions plans. However, self-assessment covering all aspects of the provision has not been produced for the past academic year. Staff and managers have not made judgements about core aspects of the provision or the student experience.



### **What does Northbrook College need to do to improve further?**

- Continue to improve student retention rates across all areas of engineering through improved advice and guidance, effective monitoring of students' progress and greater support for those at risk of withdrawing before completing their courses.
- Significantly improve weaker teaching and learning by developing learning activities that are varied, exciting and challenging and cater for the different needs of all students.
- Significantly improve the NVQ assessment planning in electro-technical programmes to ensure students capture all appropriate evidence from the moment they start on the programme.
- Further develop the mutual sharing of good practice to ensure that all students have equal access to extra-curricular activities that motivate them further and introduce them more into the world of work.
- Improve self-assessment to ensure overall judgements are accurate and influence the breadth of all engineering provision.

## Arts, media and publishing

## Grade 2

### Context

33. The college provides a broad range of full-time vocational courses in the creative arts that includes art, design, media, music, dance and drama from foundation to advanced level and offers an extensive range of higher education provision. Of the 822 further education students, 691 are aged 16- to 18-years-old and the remainder are adult students.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Long course success rates have risen significantly in recent years. Success rates in 2010/11, for 16- to 18-year-old and adult students, were above and at the national average respectively. Success rates on music courses were high and on art and design and performing arts courses were slightly above national rates. However, although improved, media-related courses were below the national rate.
- Students achieve high grades across all subjects. The majority of students successfully progress to work or further and higher education, with many of these students achieving places at prestigious universities and schools of design, music and drama. Attendance and punctuality are good and behaviour is excellent.
- Students consistently produce very high standards of practical work. For example, in fashion, students produce constructed textiles work that is adventurous and executed with precision and correctness. Students' performance work demonstrates high levels of maturity and commitment. Many students develop their skills further by supporting productions, performances, and events both inside and outside of the college.
- Students are adept in their use of technology and equipment, helping them to realise strong practical work. Students' communication and presentation skills are good and students contribute confidently and respectfully in peer discussions and presentations. Collaborative projects, such as festivals, theatre tours, open events and real design projects, provide exciting opportunities for students to work together from across the different subject areas.
- Overall, teaching and learning are good. At foundation and intermediate levels, teaching is particularly strong and the use of learning resources is particularly effective in motivating and engaging these students and helping them achieve. Many teachers work in the creative industries and use their knowledge of professional practice effectively to help students be aware of employment trends and industry expectations.
- However, in some lessons, teachers miss opportunities to encourage students to work in small groups or to consider and contribute their own answers and solutions. In the minority of lessons, quieter students are not given sufficient opportunities to have their views heard. Teachers are too quick in reviewing

previous learning without giving students opportunities to check their own understanding.

- Assessment is good and students receive regular and constructive feedback. The VLE is used effectively to support assessment and as a resource for project work. Students are actively encouraged to share and record their experiences, for example on the foundation course, students' post reflective blogs about visits they make to higher education providers.
- The range of courses offered by the college is extensive and provides both creative and technical pathways to higher education. Qualifications are offered as one year courses and are effective in meeting the needs of stakeholders. Students are well informed about their career and progression pathways and effective use is made of a personal and social development qualification to help learners plan their next steps.
- The use of partnerships to benefit learning is outstanding. The college takes an active lead on artistic events and projects in the local and wider community. This includes, for example, charity fashion shows, a twice-weekly rock school for local schools, a schools cabaret tour and a world music event to promote different cultural musical heritages.
- Support for students is excellent. Supported students achieve well and there is an effective and coordinated approach to monitoring and supporting all students. Social inclusion is outstanding.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders set and achieve challenging targets and standards are rising. There is now a strong commitment amongst staff to quality improvement and they value opportunities given to them to share best practice. Self-assessment is accurate and correctly identifies the key areas for improvement. However, specific teaching and learning improvements are not given sufficient prominence in the quality reports.

### **What does Northbrook College need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that media production courses are improved through the rigorous application of actions that have proved successful in other areas of the curriculum area.
- Further develop teaching practice to ensure that all students have more opportunities in lessons to explore learning autonomously and that each student participates actively and fully in lessons.
- Ensure that specific teaching and learning areas for improvement identified as part of the self-assessment process are more explicit and detailed in quality and progress monitoring reports.

## of other languages (ESOL)

### Context

34. The college provides the full range of literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses from entry to intermediate level. Courses are taught across the main college sites and in community venues. At the time of the inspection, 317 students were enrolled, of whom 118 are ESOL students, 111 are studying mathematics and 88 are studying English. Seven students are aged 16 to 18 years. Most students take externally accredited qualifications.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates have steadily improved and, in 2010/11, numeracy and ESOL were above, and literacy at, the national average. However, within the programme areas, success rates vary too much. Actions to improve performance from the start of the academic year have resulted in significant improvements to achievement rates in ESOL and functional skills mathematics.
- Students enjoy their lessons. They work well and supportively together in groups and with the teachers. Progress to further training, employment or other activities is good. Students develop good awareness of personal safety and how to improve their health and well-being. Students feel safe in the college and the standard of their work is satisfactory. However, attendance rates are well below college targets.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, mainly mathematics, students develop their skills well through a varied range of differentiated activities. Teachers plan lessons well and are skilful at ensuring all students participate. In English and ESOL, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by developing a personal dictionary. Peer support and small group work are effective in developing students' social and communication skills. Teachers provide constructive written feedback.
- In weaker lessons, teachers talk too much and insufficient links to vocational subject areas are made and plans do not meet individual students' needs. Group work is over used and prevents some students focusing on developing specific individual skills. The use of ILT is under developed to stimulate learning, even though most classrooms are well equipped.
- The college offers satisfactory provision to meet student needs. Recent initiatives provide opportunities for unemployed adult students to attend English and mathematics sessions and ESOL courses for women only. The range of provision is appropriate. This year only speaking and listening courses are offered in ESOL. The use of partnerships to extend learning is limited.
- Care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. The monitoring of students' progress is effective and support for those at risk of withdrawing before they have completed their courses is good. Pastoral support is

appropriate. Comprehensive student group profiles are appropriately used to set individual student targets, although the continuous review and monitoring of students' progress is not always a routine activity. Additional support in lessons is satisfactory but varies in its effectiveness.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. At the start of the academic year the college established a robust quality improvement system with significant improvements in overall success rates. However, there is still some variation between the performances of students on different levels. Concerted efforts to improve attendance and punctuality have had little impact. It is too soon to measure the full impact of steps taken to improve aspects of teaching.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good. Equality and diversity are well planned and actively promoted in lessons and through displays around the college. The diversity of students is used well in lessons to make learning meaningful and relevant. The use of equality and diversity data to measure the performance of different groups is under developed.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. However, it is insufficiently focused on the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on outcomes. The quality improvement action plan does not identify all areas for improvement or appropriate actions necessary to bring about improvement. Student feedback has not led to tangible improvements, such as changes to lesson times.

### **What does Northbrook College need to do to improve further?**

- Continue to tackle students' lateness and poor attendance vigorously by raising their expectations and providing appropriate guidance, rewards and sanctions.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring teachers use a greater variety of teaching and learning methods, plan lessons to meet all students' individual needs and significantly increase the use of ILT to stimulate learning.
- Ensure all teachers set challenging and specific targets to develop and improve students' literacy and numeracy skills and ensure these are reviewed regularly.

## Information about the inspection

35. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the provider'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, 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.
36. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. 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)**  
**Northbrook 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 <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Number of enrolled learners at the time of the inspection</b>					
Full-time learners	1,575	0	1,309	266	0
Part-time learners	3,361	203	37	1,146	1,531
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	-	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	3				
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3				
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				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	-				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	-				
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	-	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>				
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>	2				
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?	3				
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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