

# South Worcestershire College

## General further education college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>23-26 October 2012</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Inadequate-4</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Inadequate-4
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Inadequate-4

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is inadequate because:

- A significant proportion of students aged 16 to 18 do not achieve the qualification for which they enrol and too many fail to make adequate progress based on their starting points.
- Achievement gaps between groups of students on different courses are too wide. The proportion of students successfully completing and achieving qualifications declined on several significant courses in 2011/12 and in many instances are too low.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable and does not meet the individual needs of students in all lessons. The setting and monitoring of academic targets is inconsistent and too many students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their full potential.
- Governors, leaders and managers have made slow progress in improving students' outcomes and in rectifying areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Targets are not adequately set or monitored to drive improvements or to enable managers to be held to account for their performance.
- Leaders and managers do not use performance management information effectively to drive improvement. Monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning processes are weak and curriculum managers do not implement actions to improve areas for which they are responsible in a timely manner.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- An inclusive, welcoming and friendly environment where students feel very safe.
- Good work-based learning provision that enables apprentices to develop high level practical skills and to achieve well.
- Good pastoral support for students, particularly vulnerable students and those with special educational needs.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Implement robust performance management arrangements at all levels that increase accountability and drive improvement. Ensure managers and staff at all levels are set specific and measurable targets that challenge them to improve areas for which they are responsible. Frequently monitor performance against targets and robustly hold managers and staff to account for underperformance.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons by planning for and meeting the learning needs of individual students in lessons. Ensure that teachers use all the available information about students' learning and progress, including initial assessment results, learning styles and progress information when planning lessons.
- Raise success rates to at least average levels, particularly for students aged 16 to 18, and especially on advanced-level courses by ensuring all students are set challenging targets based on initial assessment results, prior attainment information, and taking account of their previous experience.
- Robustly monitor students' learning and progress consistently across the college against the achievement targets set. Ensure managers establish procedures to identify promptly those students at risk of non-completion or underachievement and that staff provide the necessary support or challenge so that students achieve to their full potential.
- Support teachers to extend the range of teaching methods used, including the use of technology and the college's virtual learning environment and strengthen teachers' use of assessment during learning activities. Ensure teachers make frequent checks on students' learning and progress and that they develop students' language, literacy, and numeracy skills to enable students to participate fully in activities.
- Enhance the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons by further developing the knowledge and confidence of staff in discussing and debating equality and diversity themes. Ensure curriculum planning incorporates the promotion of equality and diversity consistently and that naturally occurring opportunities to further develop, promote or reinforce students' knowledge and understanding are fully exploited.
- Significantly enhance the effectiveness of curriculum managers by developing their monitoring and evaluation skills and by ensuring they use all available information to plan and implement improvement actions in areas for which they are responsible in a more timely manner.
- Significantly enhance the effectiveness of governors in driving improvement. Review the effectiveness of the governing body in holding the college to account for its academic performance. Ensure that governors have the necessary range of skills, knowledge and expertise to enable them to understand academic performance information and to set challenging targets that are specific and measurable and which secure higher levels of accountability.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Inadequate
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- Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 have been low for the last three years and at advanced level they declined further in 2011/12. At foundation level, although success rates increased from a very low starting point in the previous year, they remain low when compared to similar colleges. Success rates at intermediate level increased in 2011/12 and are above average.

- Success rates for adults have risen year-on-year for the last three years and are broadly average overall. Success rates increased in 2011/12 at foundation and intermediate levels but declined at advanced level. Adult students achieve better outcomes than students aged 16 to 18 at all levels.
- Many students do not make the progress expected of them based on their starting points. Students of all ages on advanced-level courses make inadequate progress. Inspection evidence indicates that many students are not encouraged to be independent learners, to develop problem-solving skills or to be reflective in their thinking.
- The standard of students' work generally meets course requirements but rarely extends beyond that required to achieve a pass grade. Too many students are not sufficiently challenged to realise their full potential and the proportion achieving high grade passes on courses where they are able to do so is low.
- The relatively small number of apprentices on work-based learning courses achieve well. Success rates are high and most students achieve within the timescales set. Students develop good vocational skills and produce work to a high standard.
- Achievement gaps between different groups of students across different courses are too wide. Long course success rates declined in 2011/12 in several significant curriculum areas and on too many courses are too low. For example, in sport and in public services on the diploma and extended diploma courses, success rates are well below average and on the certificate in health and social care course the success rate is very significantly below the national rate.
- The development of students' personal, social and employability skills is too variable. While the proportion of students achieving functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics has increased, the relevance and importance of developing literacy and numeracy skills is not always well promoted. Opportunities for work experience and for students to participate in developmental extra-curricular activities are variable and are limited in some curriculum areas.
- Careers advice and guidance is poor and progression rates between levels of study are low. Initial advice and guidance is not always effective in ensuring students are enrolled on the right course at the correct level. Too many students leave the college with an unknown destination.
- The college provides a friendly and harmonious learning environment where pastoral support for students is good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good personal and social skills and are fully integrated into college life. Students feel very safe and the majority enjoy college life.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies within and between most curriculum areas and this is reflected in the considerable differences in students' outcomes across different courses and levels. In most curriculum areas, teaching is improving and an increasing number of lessons are now good but a higher proportion still require improvement. Very few lessons are inadequate or outstanding. Teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices are good.
- Teachers are highly supportive of their students and have positive working relationships. They use their good subject knowledge and expertise extremely effectively to link theory to practice and to motivate and engage students in learning. In most lessons students display good attitudes and learn productively. However, in a minority of lessons, low level disruption has a negative impact on students' progress.
- In the most effective lessons teachers plan for the full range of student's needs, including the more able, and use a variety of methods and tasks to engage and motivate students. These lessons are characterised by good use of questioning techniques and the frequent checking of students' learning and progress. In these lessons meaningful and memorable activities that students enjoy enable students to learn and make good progress.

- In the majority of lessons, where students' progress is at best satisfactory, teachers' expectations of students are insufficiently high. In these lessons the pace of learning is often too slow and students are not challenged sufficiently in class or through target setting to realise their full potential. Teachers do not use students' profiles to plan lessons fully to meet individual needs.
- Teachers develop students' independent learning skills on most courses and direct students appropriately to additional resources. Some courses and subject areas use information technology innovatively to extend learning, such as the use of an instant translator in a functional skills lesson. However, the college's virtual learning environment is weak in a minority of subject areas, thereby restricting students' opportunities for directed self-study.
- Arrangements for pastoral care are good. Links to external agencies to identify and support more vulnerable students are well established and very effective. Progression tutors set and monitor personal targets with each student and this year a qualification accredits a range of personal, social and employability skills. Students' attendance is closely monitored and attendance rates are satisfactory overall.
- Initial advice and guidance are satisfactory and enable most students to make informed choices about their programmes of study. In a few cases inappropriate advice and guidance has caused students to struggle to achieve because their level of prior attainment is too low. Students with specific learning needs benefit from comprehensive transition arrangements prior to enrolment.
- Academic target setting and the monitoring of students' progress is poor. While targets for academic achievement are generally set they are not always based on initial assessment results, prior attainment information, or students' experience and ability levels. Targets are not always set in a timely manner and in some instances are short term, task-driven, and not sufficiently aspirational. Staff responsibilities for monitoring and reviewing targets are unclear in some curriculum areas.
- Enrichment activities within courses are satisfactory. Group tutorials ensure good coverage of a range of useful topics and encourage students to work with students from other courses, to contribute to the wider community, and to develop personal and employability skills. Work-experience opportunities provide valuable learning experiences in a minority of curriculum areas.
- The use of assessment and feedback is variable across the college. The assessment of students' work is generally satisfactory but the feedback provided is inconsistent in helping students to improve. In a minority of cases feedback is insufficiently detailed and poor grammar and spelling is not always corrected.
- The development of students' functional skills in English and mathematics is variable. Timely initial and diagnostic assessment identifies literacy and numeracy support needs but the information is not used to inform students' learning programmes as the course students are enrolled upon dictates whether functional skills in either English or mathematics are developed.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is poor. While teachers encourage good working relationships built on trust and respect, curriculum planning does not always ensure the promotion or reinforcement of equality and diversity themes. Students do have a basic understanding of equality and diversity but naturally occurring opportunities to further develop their knowledge and understanding in lessons are often missed.

**Health, social care and early years****Learning programmes for 16-18****Learning programmes for 19+**

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across the department with too few lessons being good overall. Students' outcomes are broadly average although success rates are low on some courses. Inspection evidence confirms that not all students are sufficiently challenged by consistently good teaching, learning and assessment to enable them to achieve to their full potential.
- While most students make satisfactory progress in lessons, too few are challenged sufficiently to achieve at a higher level. Lesson planning does not consistently take account of the full range of individual needs. While the most effective lessons use a wide range of teaching methods to motivate and engage students in meaningful learning activities, typically lessons provide too few opportunities for students to develop a deeper understanding of health and care related topics.
- Teachers provide good one-to-one support for students and often use their vocational experience and expertise well to link theory to practice. Work experience placements are well organised and contribute very effectively to developing students' practical health and care skills. Assignments are well designed and use real-life scenarios to test students' understanding. The use of technology, including the college's virtual learning environment, is weak.
- Initial assessment, advice and guidance are not always effective in ensuring students are placed on an appropriate course. Initial diagnostic assessment and the resulting student profiles are not used consistently by teachers to plan lessons or to set timely academic targets for students to achieve.
- The monitoring of students' progress against targets set requires improvement. Progression tutors have insufficient time allocated to effectively monitor and support the number of students allocated to them. While students make adequate progress overall, many are not challenged or supported sufficiently to achieve higher grades.
- Assessment practices are good. Frequent formative feedback provides clear judgements about the quality of students' work and feedback usually informs students about what they could do to improve. However, too few students resubmit their work to achieve higher grades and the proportion gaining high grade passes is low.
- Advice and guidance for career progression is poor. The curriculum does not promote the full range of employment opportunities available and employers are not used effectively to enhance the college learning experience. The minority of students that progress to higher education courses do receive satisfactory advice and guidance.
- Equality and diversity are not routinely reinforced in lessons. While students develop a basic understanding of equality and diversity themes, opportunities to further promote, reinforce or develop students' knowledge are not maximised. Lessons do not enable students sufficiently to explore, discuss and debate key issues within the context of their course.

**Hairdressing and beauty therapy****Learning programmes for 16-18****Learning programmes for 19+**

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are improving but are not yet consistently good. In too many lessons the pace of learning is slow and this prevents students from making rapid progress in developing higher-level skills. Students' outcomes have recently improved and a higher proportion of students are now successfully achieving their target qualification.
- Teaching in practical lessons is generally well planned and enables students to develop good vocational and client care skills. Teachers use their commercial experience and expertise well to enhance learning. A wide range of teaching methods, including the use of competitions, is becoming increasingly effective at engaging and motivating students to learn.
- Teaching is good in a minority of theory lessons. The most effective learning takes place when teachers use interactive learning technology that motivates and engages students in meaningful activity. In these lessons students are able to develop a deeper understanding of hair and beauty treatments and techniques and can develop their independent learning skills.
- Too many theory lessons are less effective because of the slow pace or because activities are not well matched to individual students' prior experience or ability level. In these lessons more able students are not sufficiently challenged to develop their understanding beyond the requirements of the course. In a few lessons teachers do not check students' understanding frequently enough to ensure their previous learning has been consolidated.
- Initial assessment, advice and guidance are satisfactory and ensure students are recruited to the correct level of course. Additional learning needs are identified and students requiring help receive good support. Students are made aware of progression opportunities and the curriculum is planned appropriately to enable students to move from one level to the next. Progression rates to higher levels of study or to employment are satisfactory.
- Assessment is frequent and fair. Students receive regular verbal feedback following the completion of practical tasks that is constructive and developmental. Written feedback within students portfolios is often more cursory and is limited to recording whether assessment criteria have been achieved.
- The tracking and monitoring of students' progress is good. Targets, including useful short-term targets relating to skills development, are set and are closely monitored by teachers and progression tutors. Students have access to their targets electronically and are encouraged to track and monitor their own progress.
- Students develop good personal, social and employability skills. Valuable work experience placements and salon manager roles within the college develop students' confidence, communication and team working skills. Functional skills in English and mathematics are developed adequately although opportunities to develop these skills are missed in many vocational lessons.
- Equality and diversity are not routinely reinforced in lessons. Naturally occurring opportunities to promote equality and diversity in vocational lessons are frequently missed. While students do have a basic understanding of key equality and diversity themes, resources used in teaching, learning and assessment do not always further promote or develop students' knowledge and understanding.

## Sport and public services

### Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not effective in ensuring students make adequate progress or achieve their full potential. Teaching is not planned to meet individual students' needs and student progress is not effectively monitored. Many students do not achieve the qualifications for which they enrol as reflected by the low or very low success rates on many courses.
- While students generally enjoy their lessons and are engaged in learning activities, low level disruption adversely affects the pace and progress of learning. Lessons are not planned effectively to take account of individual students' prior attainment, experience or ability levels. Theory lessons are typically dominated by the teacher, with students remaining passive for long periods of time. Teaching in practical lessons is more engaging, memorable and enjoyable for students and develops their sporting ability and their understanding of performance.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and good working relationships with students. Teachers are starting to use a wider range of teaching methods to motivate and engage students in lessons. While classroom practice is improving, in too many lessons students' knowledge and understanding is not checked frequently enough and students are not supported or challenged sufficiently to be independent learners. The use of technology, including the college's virtual learning environment, is poor.
- Initial advice and guidance are not always effective in ensuring students are placed onto the correct level of course. Initial assessment identifies students' support needs although not always in a timely manner. Initial advice and guidance and initial assessment processes have been strengthened in the current academic year but it is too early to judge the impact of these new arrangements.
- Arrangements for setting and monitoring students' academic achievement targets are weak. Targets are not always set early enough and in too many cases are not adequately based on students' prior attainment, experience or ability level. Targets are not reviewed frequently enough against performance to ensure all students are stretched and challenged to achieve to their full potential.
- Assessment practices are too variable and are not used effectively to inform lesson planning to aid students' progress. Marking and feedback does not always provide sufficient detail about what students need to do to improve. Assessment is not used consistently to monitor students' progress as responsibilities for monitoring progress against targets between pastoral support staff and teachers are unclear.
- The development of students' personal, social and employability skills is satisfactory. Communication and team working skills are well developed and in the most effective lessons functional English and mathematical skills are further improved in a vocational context. Many students undertake additional qualifications that are relevant, useful and beneficial to their future employment prospects.
- The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is variable. While some teachers do plan lessons which incorporate the promotion of equality and diversity with vocational relevance, this is not consistently the case. In too many lessons naturally occurring opportunities to further develop students' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity themes are missed.



**The effectiveness of leadership and management****Inadequate**

- An ambitious vision and a range of strategies for raising standards have had insufficient impact in improving students' outcomes. Although some areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been addressed, important issues such as the setting and monitoring of challenging targets are yet to improve sufficiently. Too many targets, at all levels, remain insufficiently specific, realistic or challenging, and robust monitoring of these so that underperformance can be promptly identified and rectified, is inconsistent.
- Students are well supported but insufficiently challenged to achieve as well as they can. Responsibility for students' progress is split between teachers and tutors with pastoral and support roles. Lines of accountability for students' standards and progress are not sufficiently clear, and rates of progress and success vary considerably across the college.
- Governors, while very supportive of the college, have not effectively held senior managers to account for the academic performance of courses. Governors are aware through their monitoring that key performance indicators have not been met but they have not taken sufficiently robust action over time to drive improvements to students' outcomes. The monitoring of performance is insufficiently robust because the targets set are insufficiently specific or measurable and do not enable clear lines of accountability to be established.
- Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been successful. Despite teaching, learning and assessment requiring further improvement overall, the proportion of good and better teaching has increased over time and teachers are now more confident in the use of a wider range of teaching methods. Teaching has improved because of enhancements made to the observation process that now provides teachers with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their practice and because of well-focused professional development activities.
- Self-assessment processes are inclusive, and make good use of evidence from course audits, internal inspections, teaching observations and outcomes data. Students are given adequate opportunity to express their views, which are responded to appropriately and are considered when evaluating the quality of provision. While self-assessment is broadly accurate and identified most curriculum areas and all cross college aspects as requiring improvement, it failed to give sufficient weighting to the slow progress made by leaders and managers to improve students' outcomes that resulted in these aspects being judged inadequate at this inspection.
- Curriculum management is ineffective in driving improvements to students' outcomes. College policies and procedures are not always adhered to and curriculum planning is not fully effective in all areas. Managers have been slow to design more flexible curriculum arrangements to enable progression to higher-level courses. Although new subjects are added to the curriculum offer in response to local needs, some class sizes remain very small. The management of work-based learning provision is satisfactory.
- Curriculum managers are provided with accurate information to help them identify issues and manage areas for which they are responsible, but their monitoring and evaluation practices vary considerably. Information is not always used effectively to plan improvements or to deal with underperformance in a timely manner. Development plans are insufficiently detailed and targets are not sufficiently specific or measurable to enable the rate of progress or the level of performance to be adequately monitored.
- Equality and diversity are promoted adequately across the college during themed weeks, at induction and during tutorials. The equalities committee meets regularly to ensure that all aspects of diversity, including specific aspects of sexual orientation and transgender, are managed appropriately. All policies are assessed for their impact on different groups, and complaints and disciplinary logs are monitored to identify equality issues. Managers have identified gaps in student achievement rates but these are related to course performance rather than to discriminatory practice.



- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students. In addition, managers have formed strong links with other organisations involved in safeguarding, and have stringent tracking arrangements to ensure vulnerable students, including children leaving care, are very well protected.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### South Worcestershire College

<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	<b>14-16 Learning programmes</b>	<b>16-18 Learning programmes</b>	<b>19+ Learning programmes</b>	<b>Apprenticeships</b>	<b>Other work- based learning</b>	<b>Employability</b>	<b>Foundation Learning</b>	<b>Community learning</b>
	Overall effectiveness	4		4	3	2			
	Outcomes for learners	4		4	3	2			
	The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3		3	3	2			
	The effectiveness of leadership and management	4		4	4	3			

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Health and social care	3
Early years and playwork	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Sport	4
Public Services	4



## Additional socio-economic information

South Worcestershire College is a small general further education college serving the south of the county of Worcestershire. The two main campuses are both located close to their respective town centres in Evesham and Malvern. The six secondary schools in the local area all have sixth forms and five further education providers are located within a 20 mile radius of the college.

The area served by the college has no significant levels of deprivation and levels of unemployment are below those nationally. The proportion of students who achieve five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics in the local area is close to the national average. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups is lower than average.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Paul Joyce HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Vice Principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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