

# Walford and North Shropshire College

## General further education college

Inspection dates		30 April–3 May 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider requires improvement because:

- Although the college's success rates have improved significantly, the majority of courses have success rates, which are at their national averages. Most learners make satisfactory progress when compared with their starting points, however, few are making better than expected progress.
- Teachers' assessments of learners' written work and skills are satisfactory but their feedback to learners on how to improve both their work and their spelling is inconsistent and too often is not helpful enough. Their use of information and communications technology to support learning is insufficiently established.
- Managers' assessments of the standards of teaching and learning are insufficiently rigorous and do not provide a sufficiently clear indication of the quality of the college's teaching and learning.
- The quality of management varies too much and in weaker areas is not good enough.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- Good success rates on A-level courses and short courses and in functional skills and the high achievements of 14-16 year old learners.
- Teachers' successful develop learners' practical skills and use their specialist expertise to improve learning by making it more relevant and interesting.
- The college's very good relations with local schools and other organisations and locally situated businesses that benefit all learners.

## Full report

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

- Improve the impact lesson observation has on teaching, learning and assessment by focusing more clearly on learning and the progress that learners make and by ensuring observers evaluate and grade the quality of lessons more effectively.
- Make better use of initial assessment so that teachers and other staff have a clear understanding of what they have to do to support each learner and so that learners on foundation courses become independent learners more quickly.
- Teachers, trainers and assessors should focus more on raising the expectations of learners in all lessons and engage learners more effectively by providing a broader range of learning activities.
- Establish better opportunities for individual and group learning by making better use of information and communication technology.
- Ensure assessment practice is more effective by providing better feedback on how learners can improve their written work.
- Monitor and track learners on employer-responsive learning more rigorously so that more learners complete their training within their planned timescale.
- Ensure that managers at all levels increase the pace and impact of change so that all learners receive a consistently high quality experience.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Requires improvement
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- Walford and North Shropshire College's (WNSC) success rates are average when compared with similar colleges and require improvement. Between 2009/10 and 2010/11 younger learners' long course success rates increased significantly and, with a smaller improvement in 2011/12, are now average. The college's pass and retention rates are average except at foundation level where retention rates are below average.
- Adult learners' success rates have not improved enough and they remain below average. Their pass rates have improved to the average but retention rates at intermediate level and particularly at advanced level are low.
- Learners' staying-on rates have increased significantly in the current academic year in the large majority of curriculum areas, as shown by the college's in-year monitoring reports. These are most marked for 16-18 year old foundation learners and advanced learners. Learners' attendance and punctuality are mostly good.
- In the last three years learners' short course success rates have increased significantly and are now well above average. These increases are more marked for younger learners, many of whom successfully complete short courses in addition to their main qualification in order to improve their employability.
- Learners' success rates on A-level courses are outstanding but success rates at AS-level remain below average. Learners' achievement of higher grades at A- and AS-level is average and showed little improvement over the last three years. Data provided by the college for the current year indicate good in-year improvements in AS/A2 examination results in most curriculum areas.
- Overall, learners on advanced level courses make the progress expected of them, when compared with their prior attainment. In a few subjects, including animal and horse

management and uniformed services, progress is good or better. On A- and AS-level courses learners underachieve. The majority of learners on vocational courses develop good practical skills, however, progress in lessons varies too much.

- Learners' success rates on GCSE courses are near average. The achievements of 14-16 year old learners are very good and on completion of their courses, most of them progress to further education, with the majority staying at WNSC.
- Men generally succeed better than women on both classroom- and employer-based learning. Learners from different ethnic backgrounds achieve at broadly similar rates. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, particularly those with dyslexia, do not succeed as well as other learners.
- The proportion of learners, particularly adults, who successfully achieve qualifications in functional skills is well above average. Higher-grade pass rates in GCSE English and maths are low. Learners' success rates on community learning courses have improved and they are satisfactory.
- Apprentices' framework success rates are in line with national averages, 16-18 year old apprentices make the progress expected of them but older apprentices make slower progress, particularly at intermediate level. Other workplace learners in most subjects have success rates similar to those of other colleges, although their progress is slow. Overall success rates on subcontracted provision are just above the college average, although this varies between subcontractors from well above average to very low.

## The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, reflecting outcomes for learners, which also require improvement. Too many lessons are less than good and few are outstanding. Teaching, learning and assessment in health and social care, early years and playwork, engineering, and transport operations and maintenance are good. However, in the newly introduced employer responsive provision in poultry and for the very small minority of classroom-based learners on foundation courses in independent living and leisure skills, they are inadequate.
- In the best lessons, learners benefit from imaginative and well-planned activities. For example, in one lesson, learners of forensic science were enthusiastically engaged in a role-playing activity based on a court case. They analysed and evaluated well the forensic evidence available in order to arrive at a jury verdict.
- In less effective lessons, teachers use a narrow range of teaching activities and provide insufficient stretch or challenge. These lessons are often characterised by insufficient planning to meet the full range of learner needs, a slow pace, or ineffective questioning techniques to check learning. Prior to inspection, the college had already recognised these as priority areas for staff development.
- Apprentices benefit from good individual coaching. Assessors use their good knowledge of the industry well to provide challenging questioning and to develop learners' skills and their ability to self-reflect.
- Teachers use information and communication technology appropriately in the majority of lessons. In the best instances, this includes using video clips or web-based materials to enhance learning. Tutors on foundation learning make insufficient use these technologies to enhance learning.
- Learners use the virtual learning environment well in some subjects but it does not provide all learners with access to high quality resources to support independent learning. The library provides learners with an increasing range of electronic learning resources to support their

studies and they use these are well. In a minority of subjects, learners make good use of social networking sites to provide mutual support and motivation.

- Assessment is mostly satisfactory and learners generally know what progress they are making. The quality of written feedback following assessment, including the identification and correction of spelling or grammatical errors, is inconsistent. Foundation learners' assessments do not always check sufficiently their understanding and do not provide them with sufficient feedback on their academic progress. Assessments of apprentices are too often reliant on paper-based evidence.
- For most learners the initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills is undertaken promptly. Initial assessment of learners on poultry courses is weak; it fails to identify their prior skills and abilities sufficiently. Foundation learner's initial assessment identifies emotional and behavioural needs effectively but does not identify sufficiently their other learning needs.
- Learners' target setting is too inconsistent. The majority of learners benefit from challenging targets that help drive forward their progress but for others the targets do not provide sufficient stretch or challenge. Teachers' use of techniques to recognise and record learners' successes in non-accredited provision is not sufficiently established.
- The development of English and mathematics for most learners is satisfactory. The college has worked hard and successfully to improve learners' functional skills.
- Learning coaches are well qualified. Learners appreciate the good levels of support they provide and the support provided by those learners who are voluntary peer mentors. Classroom support is particularly effective when the learning assistant and teacher carefully plan their support to achieve maximum benefit. Foundation learners, however, are overly reliant on the support learning assistants provide.
- Information, advice and guidance are appropriate for applicants to college courses. The support for learners to progress into higher studies or other destinations is also satisfactory.
- The college's virtual learning environment provides a good range of materials to support learners understanding of equality, diversity, health, sustainability, e-safety and other related topics. The college has worked hard to develop teachers' ability to embed equality and diversity into their teaching and their use of the wide range of related college-wide activities. However, as recognised by the college, this requires improvement in a few areas. Foundation learners do not have sufficient adaptive technologies.

## Health and social care, and early years and playwork

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

Good

- Learners are making good progress and outcomes for the majority are good because of the good teaching, learning and assessment. Success rates are improving on most courses and are around national averages. Teachers have high expectations for their learners and most use a good variety of activities that engage and motivate them effectively.
- Teachers plan the vast majority of lessons well. Learners make good progress in lessons because teachers make frequent and thorough checks that learning is taking place. Teachers use learners' previous learning and workplace experiences well to enhance learning. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is slow because they are insufficiently interesting.
- Initial assessment is thorough and used effectively to set objectives. Individual targets for the large majority of learners are clear but these do not always provide sufficient stretch and challenge for more able learners. Because teachers monitor learners' progress and attainment

effectively, they are able to provide support and encouragement to learners who need it most. In a few instances, teachers' feedback to learners on how they can improve their work is insufficiently detailed.

- Teachers possess good levels of vocational knowledge and experience and use them effectively to help learners apply their learning and become more effective in their work with adults and children. In one particularly good example, learners discovered that labelling-theory could help to explain how referring to older people as being 'grumpy' or 'difficult' can lead to negative stereotyping and discrimination in care settings.
- The college provides learners with a good range of additional qualifications, such as paediatric first aid and dementia care, which increase their effectiveness and value to employers. Teachers make sure learners improve their skills in English, grammar and spelling by correcting written work but further development of learners' English and mathematics skills in lessons is not integrated well-enough. For example, by ensuring learners can pronounce and spell specialist language, such as 'proletariat' and 'structural functionalism'.
- The college uses its links with employers very well to establish a good range of work placements rich with learning opportunities. Teachers are keen only to use work placements such as schools, nurseries and care homes which are rated good or better by regulatory authorities. This helps learners develop good employability skills such as confidence and time management. The majority of learners progress into paid employment or higher education.
- Teachers provide good information, advice and guidance which help learners make firm decisions about their choice of optional units and careers. Learners receive good individual care and support and this fosters a positive environment with increasing attendance. Learners like coming to college and value their learning and development. Tutorial arrangements are effective because they provide a clear focus on progress and achievement.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well, for example by encouraging learners to discuss the connections between income, health and well-being. Teachers ensure learners understand the importance of respecting the views and wishes of other people, particularly vulnerable people and those who depend on care services. Teachers encourage learners to value and respect difference well.

## **Agriculture and horticulture**

### **Apprenticeships**

### **Other work based learning**

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment for the majority of learners, who are on apprenticeships or workplace learning in poultry, are inadequate. The college has rushed the recent introduction of these programmes and learners' progress is very slow. The small minority of learners who are on horticulture and agriculture apprenticeships have satisfactory success rates and their teaching, learning and assessment require improvement.
- In off-the-job lessons, learners receive good individual coaching which builds confidence and encourages self-reliance. Teachers make careful use of good questioning techniques to enhance learning. In weaker lessons, activities take too long and learners lose concentration.
- Agriculture and horticulture apprentices are able to develop their skills in good professional working environments and are well motivated. Poultry apprentices and workplace learners are in satisfactory workplaces.
- Initial assessments of horticulture and agriculture apprentices are sufficient to plan for learning and assessment. Assessors know their apprentices and their workplaces well. They schedule effectively their assessment visits to take account of seasonal pressures and each learner's

progress. Target setting on learning plans has improved and assessors give learners clear actions and timescales to progress. Teachers give insufficient encouragement to a minority of learners to plan and manage their own learning.

- Initial assessments of the poultry apprentices and learners are inadequate and do not include an assessment of their prior learning or skills linked to their national vocational qualifications. Targets on individual learning and assessment plans are very weak.
- Assessments of agriculture and horticulture apprentices are thorough and detailed with sufficient evidence to support assessment decisions. Learners are well prepared and verbal feedback is constructive and informative, helping learners to improve their practical skills and background knowledge. Assessor visits are regular and learners are progressing well.
- In poultry provision, assessment practice requires improvement. Assessors' good occupational skills and knowledge give them credibility with learners and employers, but the college have only recently started training them and they are still working towards the same award as their candidates. Although assessors have appropriate support and guidance, they are not always sure of the award requirements. This has led to learners' making slow progress.
- Learners' portfolios of evidence are suitably organised and standards of work are at the expected level. Assessors' feedback on learners' written work provides insufficient guidance on how to improve and they do not correct spelling or grammar. Agriculture and horticulture apprentices receive good learning support but poultry learners who need help with their English or maths have not yet received it.
- The college monitors the progress made by agriculture and horticulture learners effectively through frequent workplace visits and regular team conferences. However, poultry apprentices' and workplace learners' target setting and the tracking of their progress are very weak. College records of workplace visits for assessments and progress reviews are inadequate.
- Many learners work in isolated rural areas. Learners, teachers and assessors use paper-based systems for learning, assessments and progress reviews. They make insufficient use information and communication technology to support learning. Staff promotion of equality and diversity through progress reviews and assessment visits is sufficient.

## **Engineering and transportation operations and maintenance**

**Learning programmes for 14-16**  
**Learning programmes for 16-18**  
**Learning programmes for 19+**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and result in good success rates at intermediate and advanced level. Success and retention rates for the foundation diploma in vehicle maintenance were low in 2011/12 but current comparable in-year staying-on rates show a significant improvement.
- Learners have well planned lessons. They understand clearly the objectives for each lesson. Teachers reinforce learning very effectively. They plan activities and handouts skilfully to meet the abilities of all learners. Attendance on engineering and motor vehicle courses is high with full attendance in many lessons.
- Teachers and assessors are well qualified. They use their knowledge and industrial experience well to relate theory to practice and frequently use up-to-date industrial examples to illustrate key concepts. Teachers regularly update their workplace skills through their very effective links with local employers.

- Teachers meet frequently to share good practice and to review learners' progress. Learning coaches identify quickly those learners at risk of leaving their course early and give them effective support and guidance to resolve their concerns.
- Resources to support learning are good. The college workshops are spacious and of a good standard. Learners have ample and appropriate tools, diagnostic equipment, vehicles and components for their use. Learners work productively and their behaviour, attitudes, attendance and timekeeping are good.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory and when required learners receive prompt and appropriate support. Learning assistants provide learners with additional learning needs with very effective support in both practical and theoretical lessons. These learners become more independent and develop greater self-confidence.
- Almost all learners are set challenging targets to ensure they make good progress on their course. Feedback from both assessments and progress reviews informs learners well of what they need to do to improve and progress but in a few cases assessment feedback is brief and unhelpful.
- Learners' develop good English and maths skills and functional skills are effectively integrated into theoretical and workshop lessons. They complete their functional skills in the planned time. Teachers' correction of spelling mistakes and grammar on written work is mostly satisfactory.
- Teachers and managers use very comprehensive tracking records to keep well informed of learners' progress. Teachers and managers keep well informed of any learners making slow progress or not completing course work on time.
- Health and safety is a high priority and teachers regularly reinforce these in lessons. Health and safety practices are good with all learners wearing appropriate personal protective equipment and working safely. Safeguarding arrangements for 14 to 16 year old learners are particularly robust with support staff from schools playing a very active role.
- Learners show considerable courtesy and patience towards each other and teachers actively challenge unacceptable behaviour. In one lesson, when an older learner expressed frustration by using inappropriate language, other learners and the teacher challenged this behaviour swiftly.

## Independent living and leisure skills

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

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. Learners develop good practical skills and gain confidence in practical lessons working as part of a team. They have a good understanding of safe work practices. However, learners make inadequate progress in developing the skills needed to increase their independence.
- Teachers use their knowledge and expertise very effectively in the practical subjects. Learners develop good routines to practise their skills, for example, in handling small animals, grooming horses or sowing seeds and propagating plants. Most improve their listening skills and become more able to follow simple instructions and enjoy working alongside others.
- Learning assistants provide learners with good support and appropriate guidance to help them improve their behaviour, develop their communication skills and focus on work tasks more effectively. However, in classroom-based lessons, the majority of learners rely too much on this support and develop insufficiently the skills and confidence to work independently.
- Resources for practical activities are good but in classroom-based lessons, teachers use a narrow range of active learning activities and rely too much on worksheets that often contain

inappropriate font sizes and overly complex vocabulary. They make insufficient use of information and learning technologies and adaptive technologies to support learning and to provide a more stimulating and challenging environment.

- Initial assessment is thorough and identifies effectively learners' English and mathematics skills, and behavioural and emotional needs that may affect learning. Teachers make inadequate use of this information to inform lesson planning and make insufficient use of this information to inform target setting which aims to develop learners' independence and provide stretch and challenge for all learners.
- Teachers give learners much praise and encouragement but this is often insufficiently specific. They focus mostly on managing learners' behaviour and developing their social skills and do not provide enough constructive feedback to help learners improve or know the progress they are making.
- In classroom-based lessons, learners spend too much time recording work they have successfully completed in practical lessons and often do so in unimaginative ways and learners, particularly those with poor motor skills, struggle with this work. Resources are uninspiring and teachers do not use a wide enough range or variety of learning resources to enable learners to evidence their progress and achievements. In many lessons, learners do not develop their self-evaluative skills sufficiently and make slow progress in extending their understanding of their positive, practical experiences.
- Learners' development of English and mathematical skills are inadequate. Teachers do not give these skills sufficient priority in supporting greater independence and improving employability.
- Learners receive satisfactory informal information, advice and guidance to inform their plans. Most learners progress to other further education courses, and staff help other learners to gain work experience or employment in various land-based, catering or volunteering situations.
- Tutors integrate equality and diversity well into their lessons and provide learners with a better understanding of the wider world. The college provides an inclusive environment for the varied and often complex social and educational needs of these learners.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Governors are instrumental in shaping the culture of the college and the curriculum offer and work effectively with the principal and senior managers to set out a clear mission and vision for the college in a detailed and purposeful strategic plan.
- Governors have a wide range of appropriate skills and support the college enthusiastically. They have developed useful relationships with a number of subject areas to both support and challenge managers. Governors provide managers with an appropriate level of challenge, but managers have not always provided governors with sufficiently accurate information on the standards of teaching, learning and assessment. Their oversight of finance and the development of the college facilities and estates to benefit learners are good.
- Senior leaders are aware that they need to improve learners' outcomes and are introducing a simplified management structure to help ensure managers implement the strategic objectives effectively. Teaching, learning and assessment, in subject areas where the new management structure is established have improved to good. However, managers' effectiveness is not effective across all curriculum areas; for example, employer-responsive learning and independent living and leisure skills courses are inadequate.
- The college has taken significant steps to improve the performance management of staff. Managers are now effectively holding teachers to account for their learner's progress and

outcomes and are identifying and taking appropriate corrective action to eradicate poor performance, especially in teaching, learning and assessment.

- Regular team meetings to monitor learners' progress and the introduction of learning coaches to improved support for learners at risk of leaving early are key features of the college's strategy. These have resulted in significant improvements in learners' in-year staying-on rates in most subject areas.
- Strategies to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. The internal lesson observations are insufficiently rigorous. Observers focus too much on teaching and do not evaluate sufficiently how well learners learn and progress. The college does not have a clear assessment of the standard of teaching, learning and assessment as lesson evaluations do not always reflect the grade awarded.
- Lesson observations are analysed promptly to identify actions that will lead to improvement. In a few observations, observers have not identified a suitable set of actions to support improvements in teaching practice. Staff share good practice through regular monthly meetings and the college quickly disseminate improvements in professional practice through staff development.
- Self-assessment processes are appropriate but the rigour of the analysis requires improvement. Staff at all levels are involved and learners views are gathered appropriately and considered. Course reviews focus sufficiently on actions required to improve performance. Managers monitor the implementation of the college's quality improvement plan carefully. However, at college level, self-assessment has failed to identify a few significant areas for improvement and the grades awarded are too generous. The impact on the college's overall effectiveness is insufficient.
- The college's provision meets the needs of learners attending courses at the college. It has very good relationships with schools. These support well an alternative curriculum which broadens the horizons of learners aged 14-16. The college has strong partnerships with local and regional organisations and employers, which are highly effective and are significantly improving employment and education opportunities for many groups of learners.
- The college promotes equality and diversity clearly through its corporate values and aims. A wide range of cross-college activities helps reinforce learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Managers analyse the performance of different groups of learners, but their actions to narrow the success rate gaps that exist between different groups of learners require improvement.
- Arrangements to ensure the safety and well-being of learners are appropriate. Learners feel safe and staff ensure that health and safety are a priority. The college works effectively with other agencies to meet its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners including apprentices. Staff training on safeguarding provides up-to-date and appropriate information. Checks to ensure information about employer-responsive learners' welfare is correct and easily accessible and that it includes the contact details of work-place supervisors require improvement.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Walford and North Shropshire College

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

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Health and social care</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Early years and playwork</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Horticulture</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Transportation operations and maintenance</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Independent living and leisure skills</b>	<b>4</b>

**At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:**

- Michelle Cornish, Fit4Training
- Shropshire Football Association
- Tribal Education Ltd
- Willowdene Training Ltd
- Lohmann GB Ltd
- Angela Harcourt-Thomas
- Ideal for All.

## Additional socio-economic information

Walford and North Shropshire College has five campuses. Most of the provision is delivered at the college's two main campuses at Oswestry and Baschurch. The majority of students come from North Shropshire, although land-based industries students come from further afield. The percentage of learners with a minority ethnic heritage is similar to that of the local population. The curriculum includes courses from foundation level to higher education. Classroom-based courses are available in all subject areas except construction, planning and the built environment. The college provides work-based courses in six subject areas. The percentage of pupils who leave school with five or more GCSE qualifications at A\* to C including English and mathematics in North Shropshire is below that nationally.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Simon Cutting HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy 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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