

# South Worcestershire College

## General further education college

Inspection dates		5 – 8 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-4
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- Quality improvement has raised standards of performance management and staff development initiatives have increased the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and led to better outcomes for learners.
- Well-qualified and vocationally experienced teachers provide good teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers and staff provide good education and training opportunities across both the main centres which support the local community well.
- The development of students' personal, social and employability skills is strong, links with employers are good and a high proportion of students progress into work.
- Teachers track and monitor students' progress well ensuring that the majority of students are successful.
- Teachers consistently provide students with constructive and useful feedback on their work which helps them to improve and make good progress.
- Staff promote equality and diversity well in lessons.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- While overall outcomes for students increased markedly last year, a minority of courses are still underperforming.
- Outcomes for apprentices have declined and they are below average.
- Not enough teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.

## Full report

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

- Raise the success rates in the minority of subjects and apprenticeships which remain at or below average by spreading the good practice overall in teaching and learning to these subjects and apprenticeships.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning by maintaining the drive and focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning across the college, particularly through well-structured staff development.
- Ensure that all teachers set clear and stretching targets for their students and record their progress towards these on the college's electronic tracking system.
- Ensure leaders and managers set sufficiently ambitious targets to improve consistently all areas of provision.
- Improve provision in public services by ensuring that all teachers challenge students to achieve to their full potential and provide comprehensive and constructive feedback that helps students to improve their work.
- Ensure greater consistency in the teaching of English and mathematics by sharing the good practice seen in the best lessons.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Adults' success rates have risen year-on-year for the last three years and are above the national rate. Success rates increased in 2012/13 across all levels, particularly at intermediate level, which is now well above the national rate. Success rates for adults are significantly above average in science and mathematics, humanities, languages and business studies.
- Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 have been low for the previous two years, but in 2012/13 increased markedly and are now above the national rate. Success rates at foundation and intermediate level, which were previously low, are now above the national rate. Success rates for advanced students have increased from around average to above the national rate. However, variations across subjects remain. For example, success rates are substantially below the national rate for the advanced diplomas in childcare, public services and information technology.
- Students' work is good. Most written work is at a high standard. Students develop good practical skills in vocational subjects such as hairdressing, beauty therapy and motor vehicle. Since the last inspection the proportion of learners achieving high grades has increased markedly and is now well above the national rate.
- The proportion of apprentices completing on time is above average. However, overall success rates for apprentices have declined since the last inspection and are now below the national rate. Apprentices' success rates vary considerably across subjects. For example, they are high in motor vehicle and business studies, but low in construction. Apprentices develop a good range of industrial and commercial standard skills and produce work to a high standard.
- Managers and staff have successfully reduced the achievement gap between students aged 16 to 18 and adults. No marked achievement gaps exist between males and females or students from different minority ethnic groups. The performance of students with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher when compared with other students.

- Development of students' personal, social and employability skills is good. The proportion achieving functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics continues to increase and is above the national rate. Managers and staff are making good progress in developing work experience and increasing additional activities to improve further students' learning, vocational, social and personal skills. The majority of full-time intermediate and advanced students successfully achieved an award in employability. Most learners progress to higher-level study or to employment and an appropriate number of advanced-level students move to higher education.
- Students and apprentices feel safe and enjoy the friendly and positive learning environment. Pastoral support for students is good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good personal and social skills and take a full part in college life.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved well since the last inspection and they are now good. The quality of teaching is much more consistent across the college, although a minority of lessons still require improvement. Teachers are now more skilful and imaginative in their use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to support learning and in the way they help students develop a better understanding of equality and diversity.
- Most teachers have high expectations of their students and ensure that they work hard during lessons. They have a good grasp of their subject and they link theory and practice together well. Teachers make good use of questions to extend students understanding and to check that they are learning. Teachers stretch and challenge students well during their lessons. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace and match well students' abilities. Consequently, more of them make good progress than at the last inspection. Students are attentive and well behaved during lessons.
- Managers and teachers plan courses and lessons well. Teachers provide brief but very useful pen portraits for each student and this helps effectively guide learning activities and teaching styles. This aspect of teaching has improved especially well since the last inspection.
- Not all lessons are good and a minority of issues remain from the last inspection to be fully resolved. Managers have identified these in its self-assessment report. In a few lessons, not all students are fully engaged in their tasks, a minority of teachers are less effective at using questions to aid learning and planning was not always fully effective.
- Teachers support students well and they value this support very highly. They receive good initial advice and guidance. Teachers monitor progress closely through more effective use of the electronic tracking system. Managers and teachers monitor attendance closely. It has risen since the last inspection and it is now high. Targets for both academic and personal progress are now set and most teachers use these well to help students reach their full potential. A minority of teachers are not up-to-date with setting targets and progress reviews for their students.
- Most teachers provide useful and detailed feedback to help students improve their work. In a small minority of cases, feedback is sparse and less useful, but students overwhelmingly value the regularity of assessment and the feedback they receive. Assessment reviews for apprentices are thorough and frequent. Employers are very supportive of the college's approach to keeping them informed of their apprentices' progress and training plans.
- Teachers develop students' skills in English and mathematics well, particularly in vocational lessons. Teaching and learning of English and mathematics in separate lessons is mainly good, but a few require improvement. Students written, oral and number skills are mostly good and match the level of study they are following.
- In most lessons, the promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers have employed a learning coach to develop this aspect since the last inspection and this is having a good effect. In a small number of lessons, and in few apprenticeship reviews, staff miss opportunities to

promote equality and diversity, but they are now much better at ensuring these areas are included in their lesson activities and that students are encouraged to discuss current issues and develop their knowledge and understanding.

- Students benefit from better use of the college's virtual learning environment to support learning. On most courses, teachers use ICT extensively both in the classroom and through the wider college computer network. Effective staff development has helped teachers to improve their approach to using computers to help students to learn. Students have good access to computers in most classrooms and in the learning resources centres at both college sites.

## Health and Social Care, Early Years and Playwork

### 16-19 study programmes

### 19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect students' high achievements in 2012/13. Students are very clear about the targets they need to achieve to enable them to take up professional roles and a good proportion of them progress into employment or higher-level study. Students develop their employability skills well, supported by good work placements.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students and monitor their progress closely. In the best lessons, teachers carefully match the level of work to individual students' needs. Interesting activities engage students well and teachers use group and pair work very effectively to encourage peer support. Teachers use a range of questioning especially well to challenge all students and assess their learning. Students make good progress in lessons.
- Teachers have up-to-date subject knowledge and use pertinent examples of their vocational experience to illustrate learning points. They support students well to enable them to share their practical experiences to reinforce learning. For example, a childcare student who is on work placement in a home with triplets was encouraged to explain the differences that the babies are showing in their developmental milestones.
- In weaker lessons, not all students are fully engaged in learning or challenged appropriately, particularly when staff combine groups. A minority of teachers have been slow to make use of the college's virtual learning environment to provide materials for independent study, further research, and reinforce learning and this impedes students' progress. Teachers do not always use ICT to its full potential.
- Teachers assess students' learning well. Interesting and well-designed assignments build effectively on students' previous knowledge. Teachers provide detailed feedback which enables students to improve their work and to redraft assignments to achieve a higher standard.
- Students develop their English and mathematics skills well, including the development of their professional vocabulary. Teachers provide good support in lessons and provide detailed guidance in assignments. Students understand the relevance and importance of good English and mathematics to achieve their goals and life ambitions.
- Students receive good pastoral care and teachers are sensitive to students' individual circumstances and welfare needs. Students make good use of the college's wide range of support services that provide advice and guidance on learning and personal issues. They also benefit from a wide range of activities and enrichment opportunities in the community, including providing activities and events for the users of a local day centre.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity extremely well. Work placements are mainly in the local community, but teachers prepare students very effectively to work in areas that have greater cultural diversity than that found locally. Teachers present different perspectives on care practices, for example in helping students to understand the different beliefs that some faith groups hold about certain foods.

**Motor vehicle****16-19 study programmes  
19+ Learning programmes  
Apprenticeships**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in motor vehicle are good, leading to good outcomes for students and apprentices. Overall success rates for students and apprentices are high. However, functional skills success is low particularly for English.
- Students and apprentices develop good skills, knowledge and understanding. They readily apply their skills in practical workshops and in the workplace and staff give them high levels of responsibility working on specialist and high-cost vehicles. The standard of students' and apprentices' work is high.
- Teachers use a good range of projects and realistic work activities to effectively develop students' and apprentices' personal, social, employability skills. These include students maintaining a training vehicle to full road use for the college car pool, winter and summer service checks for staff vehicles and the creation of a working garage for students who have achieved a pass grade.
- Students and apprentices make good progress and develop good skills and knowledge. Teachers provide effective, timely support to those with identified support needs and as a result the vast majority achieve successfully.
- Staff have high expectations of students and they use their good vocational knowledge and skills to plan challenging learning activities. They skilfully use questioning to check and develop students' understanding, for example in identifying tools, materials and processes and encouraging students to analyse their work. However, lesson targets often lack clarity and are more related to completing tasks rather than the development of students' skills.
- Teachers make good use of ICT in vocational lessons and make effective use of the college's virtual learning environment to extend students and apprentices' learning. However, the planning and provision of ICT functional skills for apprentices requires improvement.
- Assessment is fair, reliable and rigorous. Teachers provide good verbal and written feedback that enables students to know what they have to do to improve. This includes a newly introduced technique for recording verbal feedback for practical assessments in the motor vehicle workshop which staff then e-mail to students for them to review. Students have a good understanding of their current progress and receive good feedback on their vocational work.
- Students and apprentices have access to good resources as a result of the college's effective partnerships with employers and local companies. For example, the pool of cars in the college's workshops is changed every six months. Students develop their skills in an environment where vehicles need to be cared for, safe and fully functioning as they are sold afterwards, making this an exceptionally good realistic working environment. Managers and staff work with high standard local employers to provide apprenticeships.
- Teachers develop students and apprentices' English and mathematics well. This includes checking the spelling of new key technical words and clear written feedback correcting spelling and grammar. However, this has not improved students' and apprentices' outcomes for functional skills in English.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well through lessons. For example, discussing the advantages of automatic and manual gearboxes for people with limited mobility and emission standards in different countries. However, assessors do not sufficiently develop and extend apprentices' knowledge in workplace reviews.

**Hairdressing and beauty therapy****16-19 study programmes****19+ Learning programmes**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment in hairdressing and beauty therapy are good and reflect the good outcomes for students. Students make good progress and gain very strong employability and commercial skills in their chosen specialism. Students show their high level of skills through their success in national competitions such as the World Skills UK competition.
- Teachers are well qualified and use their up-to-date knowledge and expertise to help students develop good practical skills. In most lessons, the pace of learning is good and teachers skilfully use questioning to challenge students and promote good progress. Teachers use the recently introduced internal grading system to set and encourage high standards, motivating students to achieve high-level commercial skills and preparing them well for employment.
- Students' practical skills on both hairdressing and beauty therapy programmes are good. Beauty therapy students practise facial massage to a high standard and hairdressing students demonstrate advanced colouring knowledge and techniques. Students have a professional image and attitude in most lessons and all students have good customer care skills.
- Students benefit from the colleges' good relationships with local employers. A national health spa recognises the college as a centre of excellence due to the high standard of students' work.
- College salons at both Evesham and Malvern have a wide variety of equipment, but fail to reflect a modern commercial environment. Most rooms have good access to ICT, which in the better lessons staff employ successfully to support teaching and learning. Teachers effectively use tablet devices in teaching and learning. For example, students watch the college produced facial massage film on their devices while practicing their routine.
- Initial assessment, advice and guidance are effective in ensuring students are on the correct level course. Teachers quickly identify students with additional learning needs and ensure that they receive the support they require. Students receiving this support make good progress.
- Assessment is rigorous, fair and consistent. Teachers provide constructive and helpful feedback on written assessments that clearly explains what students did well and what they need to do to improve. Students value this feedback and take good account of it to improve their grades.
- Staff keep students well informed of their progress and they encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning by setting their own personal targets. Students benefit from regular reviews and both teachers and students understand the progress they are making. Students are aware of opportunities for progress in their specialist subject. Most students move from one level to the next and the majority of advanced-level students progress into employment.
- Teachers are good at developing students' English and mathematics skills. They take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills within their vocational programme, such as the different angles to hold hair while cutting to achieve different styles. Teachers pay good attention to spelling technical terms in lessons and correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar when marking assignments.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well in lessons, for example when discussing how to adapt a facial treatment for a male client or approaches to styling and cutting Asian and Afro-Caribbean hair. Students are respectful and supportive and work well together.

**Sport and public services****16-19 study programmes****19+ Learning programmes**

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment ensure most students' make good progress and achieve their qualification as shown by the above average success rates on sport and intermediate public services courses. However, the minority of students on advanced courses in public services, where teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, are not as successful. Students' attendance is good and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good, especially in sport.
- Well-qualified and experienced teachers manage most lessons well. They use a variety of interesting activities and examples from their own experiences to engage students. Students enjoy these lessons and learn well. Students are enthusiastic and respond well to their highly motivated and inspiring teachers.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not challenge all students to their full potential. Teachers do not always use well-structured, directed questions effectively to check learning and they allow the more confident students to dominate discussions.
- Teachers provide good pastoral care and support for students which help develop their personal and employability skills. Students have a clear understanding of progression opportunities and most move to a higher-level qualification or employment on completion of their course.
- Staff work productively with partner organisations, such as local schools and sports trusts, to provide good work experience placements for students on sport courses. Students on public services courses benefit from visits to typical work places including police and fire brigade headquarters. Teachers ensure students have up-to-date knowledge of topical issues through their good links with specialist sports trusts and members of the armed forces who contribute to students' study programmes. These links help students to make well-informed choices about their future.
- Teachers develop students' English and mathematical skills to a level required for their course, but do not challenge them to improve further. They correct grammar and spelling errors in marked work, but do not give sufficient feedback to ensure students reduce the errors in their subsequent work.
- Staff monitor students' progress well. In sport, teachers promptly set challenging targets to help students achieve their full potential. They encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and achieve well. However, in public services, teachers have not agreed targets with all students.
- Teachers use a wide range of assessment methods well and use the results productively to keep students informed about progress towards their learning goals. However, in public services teachers' written feedback is not always effective in identifying how students can improve their work to achieve higher grades.
- Students have an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity. Teachers include suitable themes in their schemes of work, but often miss opportunities to promote and reinforce equality and diversity in lessons. Teachers and students pay close attention to good safe working practices in all activities.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management****Good**

- Since the last inspection, the new principal and senior managers, supported by governors and the majority of the staff, have created a culture of ambition and high expectation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. A comprehensive range of quality improvement arrangements have contributed to a significant improvement in students' attainment, high grades and the closing of achievement gaps. The strategic plan provides a clear direction for the college and contains clear links to local and national priorities. However, a few aspects of the strategic plan are insufficiently precise to aid managers in implementing actions and monitoring its impact.
- Managers at all levels demonstrate and promote high ambition. They take account of learners and employers' views in curriculum design with a strong focus on students' ability to meet current employment practice and the skills students need to gain employment. Staff expect students to achieve well. They set and monitor demanding achievement targets that challenge students to gain skills and knowledge beyond the minimum required for their qualification.
- Governors have significantly improved their ability to support and strengthen the college's leadership and to contribute to the strategic direction of the college. Their meetings are more structured, frequent and have a clear focus on students' performance and progress. Governors receive timely and accurate reports about the standard of teaching, learning and assessment. They challenge the principal and senior managers well, holding them to account for students' performance and progression. Governors are clear about the colleges' strengths and areas for improvement. However, arrangements to link individual governors to subject areas are underdeveloped.
- Subject management is good. Managers use the appraisal process well to provide staff with clear and demanding performance measures, to promote improvement and to tackle underperformance. Staff appraisal provides a firm but supportive approach to improving performance. Managers align staff targets and development closely to students' achievement. As a result, teachers are clear about what they need to do and the support available to help them to improve. Staff morale, confidence and self-esteem are high and are reflected in the high level of support they provide to students and apprentices in a safe and caring environment.
- Self-assessment is thorough and takes good account of the views of staff, managers, students and governors. The most recent self-assessment report accurately identified the key strengths and areas for improvement for each area of the college and as a whole. The resulting quality improvement plans include detailed targets to raise standards further. Managers rigorously and effectively monitor progress towards these targets, particularly those directly linked to students' attainment. However, a minority of targets are insufficiently challenging to promote further improvement.
- Managers have strengthened the monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers use these processes well to identify and share good practice and to identify where further improvements are needed. Teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly across the college and it is now good.
- Equality and diversity has a high profile in the college and the majority of teachers promote equality and diversity well through their teaching and assessment. Since the last inspection, managers and staff have been successful in reducing achievement gaps between different student groups.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are comprehensive and the college meets its statutory requirement for the safeguarding of students. Learners have good access to counselling and welfare support if required. Learners feel safe around the college. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities to review related policies and procedures annually.

## 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>16-19 study programmes</b>	<b>19+ Learning programmes</b>	<b>Apprenticeships</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2

<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>Motor vehicle</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Sport</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Public Services</b>	<b>3</b>

# South Worcestershire College

Type of provider	General further education college								
Age range of learners	16+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 869								
	Part-time: 913								
Principal/CEO	Viv Gillespie								
Date of previous inspection	October 2012								
Website address	www.sworcs.ac.uk								
Provider information at the time of the inspection									
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
Full-time	124	62	141	49	251	105	0	0	
Part-time	12	379	32	252	41	151	1	9	
Number of traineeships	16-19			19+			Total		
	N/A			N/A			N/A		
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	81	19	19	18	0	0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	36								
Full-time	0								
Part-time	36								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	N/A								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A								

## Contextual information

South Worcestershire College is a small general further education college serving the south of Worcestershire. The two main campuses are 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>	Phil Romain HMI
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Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four 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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