

Weymouth College

General further education college

Inspection dates		13–16 January 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate-4
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Inadequate-4

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is inadequate because:

- poor strategic management and the failure by governors to hold the previous principal and other senior managers to account in monitoring the financial performance of the college have resulted in a significant budget deficit, leaving the college with insufficient resources to implement its plans
- course planning does not take account of whether courses are viable or their impact on the longer-term sustainability of the college
- the few learners on AS-level programmes do not make good progress or successfully achieve their qualification.

This provider has the following strengths:

- a high proportion of learners on vocational programmes gain their qualifications and make good progress on their courses
- learners benefit from the good development of work-related skills with the large majority going on to further education or employment
- skilled teachers ensure that good teaching, learning and assessment motivate learners to succeed
- teachers promote learners' good understanding of equality and diversity issues well, resulting in a culture of respect for others in and around the college
- very good partnership working with a wide range of employers and other organisations results in valuable additional learning for learners to broaden their skills
- effective actions by course managers have led to a positive improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, helping to raise standards and to minimise the impact of the college's financial difficulties on learners' achievement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve governance, building on the steps already taken to implement new checks and balances within the college, so that governors have the necessary financial expertise and confidence to ensure that future decisions about the college’s spending and resources do not place the college at risk.
- Urgently change the way in which senior managers determine the strategic direction of the college so that they set business objectives and put curriculum plans in place which will ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of the college.
- Take immediate steps to reduce expenditure and to generate additional revenue where possible, in order to build on the recent good work already carried out by current senior leaders in implementing a realistic financial recovery plan.
- Build on productive actions to increase the number of learners that successfully complete their qualifications, to ensure that the remaining lower achievement is speedily corrected, especially in the small number of AS-level subjects.
- Build on the successful work to improve learners’ achievement of functional skills in English and mathematics, and to ensure further improvement of learners’ high grade achievement in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Extend best practice in the planning of lessons to ensure that teachers make better use of information about learners’ previous and current progress when planning learning.
- Improve learners’ progress to a consistently high level by ensuring that their targets for improvement are more specific, informing them how and what to do to attain their goals.
- Fully consider the performance of teachers in lessons when carrying out their appraisals to sharpen the rigour of performance management.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- The vast majority of learners enrol on vocational courses, both for learners aged 16 to 18 and for learners aged 19 and over, with a relatively small number on AS- and A-level courses. Many learners are aged 16 to 19, following study programmes at level 3. The college has a growing number of apprentices, both on programmes directly delivered by the college and in close partnership with local and national businesses. A small number of learners aged 14 to 16 from local schools study part-time at the college.
- Overall, for the last three academic years, the number of learners successfully completing their courses has improved and is now just above the national rate for similar colleges. However, on longer courses, and particularly on vocational courses, learners make very good progress and the proportion successfully gaining qualifications has risen significantly.
- This positive picture of improvement is evident both for learners aged 16 to 18 and for those aged 19 and over. The proportion of learners successfully gaining qualifications has risen for all levels, with the exception of entry level, where the number of learners is relatively small. In particular, the proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 on vocational courses achieving high grades has risen significantly.
- In a minority of areas, the proportion of learners who successfully achieve their qualifications has not improved to a sufficiently high level or has declined to below national rates over time. Most significantly, at level 3, learners’ successful completion of their AS courses is too low in psychology, business studies, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics and sciences.

- Learners' success in foundation English and mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. The overall functional skills success rate was 75% in 2013/14, a very significant increase, from 57% in 2012/13. Improvement is more marked in English than in mathematics, as is the case with GCSE English and mathematics. High grade passes for each have now improved, but remain too low.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of apprentices that successfully complete their apprenticeships has risen significantly. Similarly, the proportion completing successfully within agreed timescales has risen. However, the small proportion of advanced apprentices take longer to complete their training.
- Learners often make very good progress on their courses. Based on their attainment before coming to the college, many level 3 vocational learners exceed their expected progress; however, too few learners on AS-level courses make good progress or successfully achieve their qualification.
- The college has eradicated previously significant gaps between the performance of different groups of learners.
- Learners' work is often good or better and many learners develop good skills, especially in their vocational studies, for example in performing arts and health and social care, early years and playwork. Learners' aspirations are often raised by their studies and learners are supported well to develop their skills, for example through local and national competitions. Learners often develop a good range of skills in English, but less so in mathematics where the integration of number skills within their main courses is less successful.
- Most learners on study programmes have good opportunities to develop skills for employment. Most courses include good external work experience and the curriculum pays good attention to employers' needs and learning for work. Learners' attendance is good. Adult learners develop good employability skills by learning in realistic working environments in the college. This experience enables them to progress successfully to higher levels of study. Managers have particularly thorough arrangements to track the progress of learners when they finish courses. The large majority of learners go on to higher level qualifications or into employment. Progression within the college to further study at a higher level is good. A significant proportion of level 3 learners successfully enter higher education.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- As part of this inspection, inspectors sampled and graded a proportion of the college's provision in the subject areas of health and social care, early years and playwork, hospitality and catering, performing arts, and foundation English.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, enabling many learners to achieve their qualifications. Teachers have high expectations of learners, who greatly value the support and dedication their teachers provide to help their progress in lessons and more widely.
- Teachers' good use of relevant subject-related activities and their work to improve learners' employability skills enhance learning and build learners' resilience and confidence.
- Teachers ensure that learners have good work experience on many courses and they often have study-related educational visits. Many are involved in community and volunteering projects. Underpinning these productive activities are the college's often excellent links with employers, including, for example, major supermarket and retail chains as well as international airlines. Many teachers have current industrial experience and contacts. Guest speakers from industry help learners understand their industries and help them prepare for their futures by providing mock interviews and offering master classes.
- Teachers often plan their lessons well, using detailed and comprehensive schemes of work to good effect. Teachers' well-managed questioning checks and extends learning. Teachers devise good activities which involve learners and promote good progress across the range of learners' abilities.

- Teachers usually provide extra activities for learners completing tasks quickly, to enable all learners to remain fully involved. However, they make insufficient use of the extensive and accessible information about learners’ prior achievements and strengths and weaknesses to help plan fully for each learner.
- Teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) well. This encourages independent learning, exemplified in a media lesson when learners used ILT well to facilitate their work on creating shadow puppet animation. In a business studies tutorial, the teacher checked learners’ understanding of employer rights and responsibilities through an interactive survey, accessible on learners’ mobile phones. In lessons and workshops, learners use laptops to assist them with their research or to work on assignments. The college’s virtual learning environment (VLE) is, however, underdeveloped as a learning resource. Whilst it is well structured and populated to support learners, with film and TV programmes for example, for most subject areas it is merely a repository for past examination papers, worksheets and presentations used in lessons.
- Learners are usually clear on how to improve their work, through detailed and constructive feedback from teachers. Assessed work is marked and returned quickly. Group tutorials are well structured and planned, with a strong relevance on the needs of the learners and their courses. Tutors use engaging activities, such as quizzes and games, to make them a valuable enhancement to learning. Individual progress reviews with tutors are also an integral part of tutorials. Tutors use termly course review weeks to check learners’ progress in detail.
- Teachers ensure that all learners have online individual learning plans, which they use well. Targets for improvement, however, are often too generic and focus on meeting deadlines or gaining high grades, rather than fully informing learners on the steps needed to attain their goals.
- Teachers and other staff provide very effective information, advice and guidance, ensuring that learners are on the right course, while careers teams, for example, focus on learners’ future goals and support their attainment. Staff identify additional support needs even before learners start, as the learning support teams benefit from close links with local schools and external services, allowing prompt support.
- The development of learners’ English is good overall, as most teachers emphasise the correct use of technical language and regularly correct errors in grammar and spelling. The development of mathematics, however, is less effective, and teachers take insufficient account of learners’ prior knowledge and understanding. Teachers do not always provide sufficient help for learners who struggle to make good progress. They do not make sufficient links with learners’ main course subjects, making it more difficult for learners to grasp the significance of mathematical concepts.
- The promotion of diversity in lessons is good. It is an integral part of many courses and staff plan their work well to raise awareness of these topics. In a fine arts lesson, for example, the teacher asked learners to discuss if their perception of the value of art is affected by knowing if the artist has a disability. The teacher also effectively and sensitively challenged the use of inappropriate terminology.

<p>Health and social care, early years and playwork</p> <p>14-16 part-time provision</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Good</p>
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Teaching learning and assessment in health and social care, early years and playwork are good because:

- a very high proportion of learners successfully complete their courses and progress to related employment or higher-level courses at the college or higher education. Their work-related skills are good and highly regarded by local care and early years providers

- assessment practice is good, with detailed and clear feedback on assessed work by teachers, allowing learners to understand what they need to do to improve; many learners, as a result, make good progress compared to their starting points
- the staff team works very effectively to meet the personal and pastoral needs of their learners, who benefit from very good and timely pastoral and learning support, feeling safe and well supported in college and during work placements
- teachers ensure that their learners make good links between theory and work-related practice; for example, learners in a level 1 health and social care lesson discussed the impact of poor housing on the development of young children in a mature and thoughtful way and level 3 early years learners discussed the use of craft activities as a strategy to develop the language and writing skills of small children
- information, advice and guidance are good, ensuring through the selection processes and the well planned induction period that learners are placed on appropriate courses
- teachers and work placement officers very effectively support students in planning for future employment and training
- work placements are very effective in preparing learners for employment or for further training, with work placement officers involved in all stages of learners’ selection, ensuring that learners understand the commitment necessary to meet the work placement requirements successfully.

Teaching, learning and assessment in health and social care, early years and playwork are not yet outstanding because:

- teachers do not sufficiently incorporate the teaching of English and mathematics into learners’ vocational studies; a significant minority of learners do not have a confident grasp of subject-related specialist vocabulary, and in a minority of lessons learners are insufficiently supported to write appropriately detailed notes
- in a minority of lessons, teachers do not stretch the most able learners and, on occasion, allocate too little time for learners to complete complex tasks and to develop higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. The resources used for learners’ research activities sometimes lack depth and so do not prepare learners for higher level studies.

Hospitality and catering

Good

Apprenticeships

Teaching, learning and assessment in hospitality and catering are good, because:

- a high and increasing proportion of apprentices successfully complete their programmes, developing good standards of practical work; for example, the majority quickly acquire good dexterity with small trade hand tools in line with the requirements of the profession
- teachers and assessors plan with much care and develop practical and theoretical tasks that promote good development of learners’ skills that are transferable to a wide range of different aspects of the industry
- learners’ targets for improvement are challenging and practical tasks, such as food preparation in front of customers, are demanding
- staff have high expectations of learners, who then develop high levels of enthusiasm for the industry, supported by their participation in a good range of external and internal hospitality events, as well as competitions
- learners increase their effectiveness at work as they develop good personal and social skills, such as confidence during service in the college restaurant where they meet and greet customers well

- teachers and assessors set realistic assessment targets following detailed feedback to learners; they know what they have to do and are aware of the progress they are making so that they complete their course successfully
- teachers provide learners with effective tasks that develop good English skills, for example reviewing and describing menu dishes in plain and simple non-technical ways to help communications with customers
- teachers and assessors provide good support for learners, both during and outside of lessons, helping them to progress and complete their assignments better. Assessors make themselves readily available and often carry out assessments during evenings and weekends
- teachers ensure learners develop a good understanding of the needs of different clients, for example in their dietary requirements by the use of gluten free flour in cooking.

Teaching, learning and assessment in hospitality and catering are not yet outstanding because:

- teachers do not yet sufficiently broaden the understanding of learners about the very wide range of businesses within hospitality and catering, in addition to their particular work experiences, to help them make fully informed decisions about future careers
- teachers do not always require all learners to work in a tidy and efficient manner in the kitchens, to help prepare them for standards required by commercial restaurant outlets, for example.

Performing arts

16-19 study programmes

Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in performing arts are good because:

- all learners successfully complete their qualifications in performing arts and most in music technology, achieving high standards of practical work, particularly at level 2 and in dance
- teachers plan learning activities that offer challenge to all, where effective use of questioning and useful feedback contribute to rapid and, at times, significant progress. Marked work in music and drama provides learners with extensive technical details for improvement
- learning takes place in a respectful and inclusive environment and learners are well behaved and considerate of each other, ensuring that learners of all abilities are included in learning and prepared effectively for work
- teachers provide good support for learners, and learners receive regular and positive encouragement that develops their confidence and independence, with very good careers advice for future education and employment
- teachers and learners use individual learning plans effectively to monitor and chart progress and to set realistic targets for improvement
- staff have good technical and professional expertise which they use well to maintain high levels of motivation and enjoyment that contribute to learners' good progress
- teachers plan activities that secure good collaboration between different groups of learners, developing team work and time management skills; for example, music technology learners provide technical support for performers and theatre learners manage front-of-house activities for college productions
- extensive links with regional and national arts organisations ensure learners benefit from visiting professional companies and have opportunities for relevant work experience, leading to high standards of work-related skills and high levels of progression to employment, further and higher study.

Teaching, learning and assessment in performing arts are not yet outstanding because:

- in theory lessons, teachers do not plan activities to support the needs of all learners and, as a result, learners' progress is sometimes slower
- learners' opportunities to develop skills in English and mathematics are not fully developed by all teachers, especially in ensuring accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar
- in a minority of cases, teachers' written feedback on learners' marked work lacks the detail necessary for learners to understand what they need to do to improve.

Foundation English

**16-19 study programmes
Apprenticeships**

Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation English are good because:

- the large majority of learners achieve their functional skills qualifications, with their improved English skills helping them to succeed on their main courses, resulting in good progression to higher levels of courses or employment
- teachers support learners well, using comprehensive class profiles to identify and overcome learners' barriers and difficulties early in the course
- learners develop skills of letter writing, punctuation, reading and writing for specific purposes effectively; level 3 media and business learners develop highly sophisticated, subject-related, speaking and listening skills over time as a result of analysing complex topics
- most teachers have high expectations of learners and the standards of work and progress made, both in lessons and on the courses, are good, with learners improving further by acting on helpful feedback from teachers on their marked work
- in the large majority of lessons, teaching promotes learners' interest and engages them in productive activities which enhances English skills; for example, in one lesson, learners honed their English skills as they designed a theme park, taking into account the needs of visitors with disabilities, which they incorporated into promotional leaflets
- courses are carefully planned by teachers to meet the needs of all learners. This is particularly apparent in preparation for life and work and fresh start programmes for adults where learners without previous qualifications are motivated to succeed and go on to further study
- resources for learning are good and available for learners on computers, so that they are able to catch up on any missed lessons by accessing materials used in the classroom. Learners enjoy using computers to conduct research online and obtain immediate feedback from teachers and other learners in lessons.

Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation English are not yet outstanding because:

- the proportion of high grade passes in GCSE English has improved but remains low
- teachers do not always use the findings of initial assessment to plan learning which is geared effectively to the needs of learners, resulting in a lack of stretch and challenge for stronger learners and, in a minority of cases, insufficient academic support for weaker learners
- a small minority of teachers do not routinely correct learners' spelling and grammar errors. A few have poor proof-reading skills, resulting in occasional mistakes on handouts and presentations.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The college has been through a period of significant upheaval, the latter part of which has been under the leadership of interim senior leaders who have had to deal with many financial problems that have beset the college for a considerable amount of time. Profligate spending up until the end of 2013/14, allied to missed opportunities for income generation, led to a very substantial budget deficit. Too many strategic decisions taken by the principal were ill considered in light of their impact on the college's finances.
- Strategic planning is poor and does not take sufficient account of the college's current financial plight in setting a realistic vision to achieve stability and sustainability, now and in the future. Reductions in staffing at management level and the turmoil caused by a number of restructures have, until recently, exacerbated the problems caused by the lack of proper financial checks and balances.
- Governance is inadequate. Governors acknowledge that procedures to monitor the college's financial status have failed to identify the implications of major expenditure carried out by the principal. They have overseen a period during which ambitious targets for income were unrealistic, with too little contingency planning to meet unexpected costs. As a result, budget deficits have grown steadily worse. The appointment of a new governor with suitable expertise in finance and accounting and the establishment of a finance committee are starting to rectify this serious gap in governance. In contrast to their lack of financial acumen, governors have a good awareness of the strengths and areas for improvement in subject areas and learners' performance. However, their involvement in forging links with curriculum areas requires improvement.
- The previous lack of experience and competence of senior leaders in managing the college's finances has now been significantly addressed through the appointment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. They have taken comprehensive action to uncover the full extent of the financial problems, identify inefficiencies, and to develop a realistic recovery strategy. Measures taken to reduce expenditure and to control spending limits have resulted in significant cost reductions and a lessening of the budget deficit. The current extended senior leadership team possesses a range of skills that closely matches the requirements of the college during the current period of uncertainty. This is reflected in a more consultative and cautious, but well-considered, approach by managers to how they intend to plan for future growth in the college's income.
- Curriculum planning requires improvement. The college's current course offer is not yet financially viable and enrolments on a number of courses are too low to ensure their long-term sustainability. The rationale for growth in vocational subjects such as health and social care and sports is very clear in meeting local enterprise partnership (LEP) priorities and the skills requirements for local industry. By contrast, the strategy for the re-introduction of A-level programmes has been only partially successful, with lower success rates and small class sizes.
- The performance management of staff requires improvement. Senior leaders encourage teachers judged to be outstanding to share their good practice, and a number have been promoted to management roles, where their impact on improving the quality of particular curriculum areas is very evident. However, appraisals of teachers' performance focus insufficiently on a detailed analysis of strengths and areas for improvement in their teaching and assessment practice, as evidenced through lesson observation. Targets agreed with managers following appraisal do not always identify what teachers need to do to improve further.
- Directors and sector area managers have worked hard and productively to minimise the impact of the college's financial difficulties on learners, the majority of whom achieve their qualifications successfully and make good progress. Success rates have improved over the last three years, particularly in subjects such as health and social care, engineering, and hairdressing and beauty therapy.
- Senior leaders' implementation of study programmes for young people is good overall. The majority of learners take part in external work placements to improve their employability skills,

supplemented by a wide range of imaginative enterprise activities within the college. A high proportion of learners complete functional skills English and mathematics qualifications successfully. Good careers advice ensures very good progression to higher-level courses in the college and to jobs and higher education.

- The success of the college's work in its local community continues to exemplify the nature and range of its very good partnerships. Of particular note is meeting the needs of vulnerable young people and adults who face significant personal and financial challenges in their everyday lives. Staff have been instrumental in devising courses that have helped to significantly reduce the numbers of young people who are not taking part in any form of education and training in Dorset. Well-planned programmes at the college's outreach centre in Weymouth help unemployed people gain jobs and acquire important English, mathematics and computing skills.
- Managers' focus on improving teaching and learning is effective; the quality of lessons in almost all areas of the college has risen. Teaching, learning and assessment are now good. Arrangements to assist teachers to improve their practice help most of them to identify the precise strengths and areas of development. The findings from lesson observations focus well on evaluations of learners' progress. Senior leaders' desire to improve teaching, learning and assessment lies at the heart of all staff training.
- Quality improvement arrangements, including self-assessment, are raising standards in the vast majority of subject areas. The introduction of 'mid-term reviews' to assess the performance of subject areas has brought greater accountability to curriculum teams. Self-assessment is accurate but fails to take sufficient account of the impact of poor financial management.
- Staff across the college actively promote equality and diversity. Equality and diversity champions use their specialist knowledge and experience very effectively to ensure learners with diverse needs feel well supported. Staff carry out detailed equality impact assessments of all policies to ensure they contain no direct or indirect discrimination against particular groups of learners. Staff make good use of tutorials to emphasise to learners the importance of tolerance, respect and good behaviour. In one particularly good example, they invited one of the college's cleaners to talk to learners about the impact on her job of them dropping litter around the college campus.
- Safeguarding of all learners is good. Learners feel safe in lessons and throughout the college. All staff, including governors, have received relevant safeguarding training, incorporating targeted professional development on aspects of personal safety that are particularly pertinent to the many vulnerable young people who enrol at the college. Staff have clear procedures to monitor closely the progress of learners at risk. Recent training has raised the awareness of staff to the dangers of extreme views, which they now plan to impart to learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Weymouth College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
		4	4	-	4	-	4	4	4
Overall effectiveness	4	4	-	4	-	4	4	4	-
Outcomes for learners	2	2	-	2	-	2	2	2	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	-	2	-	2	2	2	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	4	4	-	4	-	4	4	4	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Early years and playwork	2
Hospitality and catering	2
Performing arts	2
Foundation English	2

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college							
Age range of learners	14+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3843							
Acting Principal/CEO	Nigel Evans							
Date of previous inspection	June 2013							
Website address	www.weymouth.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+
	121	107	441	234	736	289	0	27
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	157	68	79	63	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	-							
Part-time	24							
Number of community learners	-							
Number of employability learners	68							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A 							

Contextual information

Weymouth College is a medium-sized general further education college. The college attracts learners from the borough of Weymouth and Portland and from the extended population in West Dorset. Many schools in the area have sixth forms. A higher proportion of local employees work in the service sector than is the case nationally and most firms are small or medium sized. Ten of the 13 areas of deprivation in Dorset are within Weymouth and Portland. The proportion of residents from a minority ethnic heritage is below the national average. The level of household income in Weymouth and Portland is lower than the national average and the area has a higher proportion of people in low-skilled employment than is the case nationally, often with poor levels of educational attainment. The unemployment rate in Weymouth and Portland is below the national rate, but above the average for the South West.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

David Martin HMI

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

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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[M1 2WD](#)

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