

Warrington Collegiate

General further education college

Inspection dates

19–22 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Require improvement
Apprenticeships	Require improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too many younger students and apprentices make insufficient progress during their courses.
- The proportion of students and apprentices who achieve qualifications is too low.
- Teaching, learning and assessment on 16 to 19 study programmes are not of a good enough standard.
- Too few students and apprentices progress to the next level of qualification.
- The college's improvement strategy has not yet had sufficient impact on teaching and learning.
- Governors have not provided effective challenge to senior leaders over time to improve students' achievements and the college's finances.

The provider has the following strengths

- The new executive leadership team has a good understanding of what is required to improve; their changes are starting to have impact.
- Students benefit from good resources and facilities.
- Students and apprentices who complete their studies develop good occupational skills.
- There are high success rates for adults on college courses at level 2.

Full report

Information about the provider

Warrington Collegiate provides further education courses and apprenticeship programmes in the borough of Warrington where it has two main sites. The college provides a wide range of post-16 education and training, including 16 to 19 study programmes, vocational courses for adults, apprenticeships and community learning. Approximately 3,400 students study at the college; of these, 1,200 are full-time students aged 16 to 19; 1,100 are adult students, including those on part-time and distance learning courses; and 1,100 are apprentices.

Warrington borough has a population of 473,100. Growth economic sectors in the city include science, technology and engineering related to the pharmaceutical sectors and information communication technology (ICT) skills across a range of sectors. The unemployment rate in the borough is lower than both the regional and national rates.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of younger students and apprentices who make good progress and achieve their qualifications and targets by:
 - applying rigour and accuracy to the evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment, and acting quickly to improve practice that is below standard
 - motivating students and apprentices to achieve well, through challenging teaching and training
 - carefully reviewing the progress made by students and apprentices, and taking action quickly to support apprentices who are at risk of not achieving.

- Increase the impact of the improvement strategy by influencing staff at all levels, in particular to improve teaching and learning.

- Improve governance by applying succession planning promptly to refresh expertise; clarifying members' roles and responsibilities; and enabling governors to improve further their challenge to leaders about outcomes for students and financial performance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Changes have been made in the senior management of the college; the new executive leadership team provides direction, shows ambition and understands clearly what is required to improve. Strategic plans align with external requirements and internal priorities. The calm atmosphere in the college demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of students bring respect, tolerance and constructive attitudes to their studies.
- The recent self-assessment identified accurately the areas for improvement to increase students' achievements. Not all staff yet have a clear understanding of what is required to raise standards and particularly to improve teaching and learning. The quality and outcomes of sub-contracted provision for apprenticeships have been weak in the past. Managers have tackled this problem, and have planned to reduce the amount of sub-contracted apprenticeship provision to zero by the end of the contract year 2015/16.
- The management of staff performance is increasingly effective. Managers employ an innovative lesson observation system for teachers who require support and intervention, which directs staff effectively to focus on their specific areas for improvement. This system has motivated teachers to improve their performance, or in a few cases has resulted in the departure of staff.
- Regular and purposeful observations of teaching and learning, conducted by qualified and experienced practitioners, are resulting in staff being more open to sharing good practice. Personalised professional development is beginning to help teachers take ownership of their improvement. The professional development programme is well received by staff, but the impact is not yet evident on teaching, learning, assessment or outcomes.
- In 2014/15, monitoring and actions to reduce differences in achievement between groups of students were weak. The new leadership team has implemented radical actions, and results from in-year monitoring show a significant positive impact on students' progress.
- Managers listen and respond to students' views in a timely manner, but do not yet effectively capture the views of minority groups of students. Students are involved in improvement and decision-making. For example, level 3 students recently received additional software resources to reflect their choice of optional units and career aspirations.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governance is weak; members of the board are unclear about their roles and responsibilities. Succession planning has not been employed to refresh expertise. Governors have not adequately resolved the problems of poor outcomes for students and financial performance over time.
 - The board is beginning to challenge leaders and hold them accountable for underperformance, as well as recognising recent improvements.
 - Leaders have improved their reporting to governors. They manage reporting and data collection effectively overall, but in some instances, such as the collection of students' destinations after they leave college, the data are incomplete.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Safeguarding arrangements promote the welfare of all students and apprentices. Risk assessments are used appropriately to minimise risk to students. Students report that they feel safe in the college. The number of students disclosing personal safeguarding concerns has increased, indicating confidence in the college's ability to support them. Staff deal with reported incidents promptly, and refer them appropriately to senior staff or external agencies when necessary.
 - Managers and staff work well with external partners to implement the Prevent strategy, and have a good record of raising the awareness and understanding of staff and students about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Employers are made aware of the Prevent agenda.
 - Students also have a good awareness of cyber-bullying, the inappropriate use of social media and the vulnerabilities of fellow students with special educational needs or disability.
 - Students develop the skills and confidence to take responsibility for their own safety and that of others.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not sufficiently challenging to enable students to make expected progress and attain good standards of work. Most students enjoy their practical classes where activities are well planned and keep students fully engaged, and their progress is monitored well by teachers. However, many theory sessions lack pace and fail to inspire students, particularly the most able.
- Teachers possess good subject knowledge and want students to do well, but too often they fail to take sufficient account of the individual's needs in their planning. Teachers' questioning techniques often fail to check or extend students' understanding.
- The quality and accuracy of marking and assessment are not consistently good. Teachers provide detailed feedback on students' written work, but too often the comments are overly positive and do not give sufficient guidance on what students need to do to improve their grades. Teachers too often fail to identify errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar or mathematical calculations. Adult students receive good detailed feedback, including guidance on how to improve their English skills.
- Students benefit from a wide range of programmes, and from accurate initial assessment which ensures that most are placed on the correct programme at the correct level. However, staff do not always make good use of information on students' prior attainment and any difficulties that inhibit learning to help them make progress, for example by arranging learning support for them.
- Teachers monitor students' progress well in practical sessions but their recording and monitoring of students' overall progress in theory sessions is less effective. In too many cases, students' targets are not sufficiently specific or challenging. Teachers do not routinely monitor and record students' progress towards meeting their targets. Managers have introduced a computerised system to record students' progress, but in a few cases, records are not wholly accurate.
- An increased use of work placements and opportunities to work on community projects enables the majority of students to develop their personal, social and employability skills well. Specialist English and mathematics teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to provide opportunities for students to engage in practical tasks. These include, for example, work on business letters, job applications, presentations, percentages, decimals, and fractions, thus enabling students to apply and consolidate their English and mathematical skills and knowledge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

- College standards and expectations are not consistently understood and applied by staff and students within the college. As a result, students do not always value the importance of high standards, for example in behaviour, or understand how these relate to the workplace. Apprentices observe high standards in their workplace and employers report that they value their contribution.
- Attendance in college is improving but is still too low, and is lower in mathematics, English and tutorial classes than in other lessons. Students are respectful to each other and have positive attitudes to learning. Apprentices demonstrate professional behaviour in the workplace and communicate effectively with employers and customers.
- Strong leadership for English and mathematics, together with specialist teaching, has raised the profile of these subjects, and students recognise the importance of them. Developing students' English and mathematical skills is not promoted or reinforced enough in vocational lessons. As a result of this, students are not having enough opportunities to apply and practise the skills learnt in specialist English and mathematics classes.
- The college enrichment programme is too narrow and does not provide sufficient choices for different groups of students. Managers are taking steps to tackle this through the development of activities, including some targeted at groups who do not normally participate. For example, the opportunity to benefit from a weekly relaxation class is increasing participation in enrichment, especially for women.
- Group tutorials are not of a good enough standard, with too many sessions lacking pace and failing to stimulate students to learn. Tutors' reviews of students' progress are improving, but they often set learning targets that are not specific enough, preventing students from reaching their full potential.
- Too few younger students have received clear advice and guidance from careers specialists to support them in considering their options, particularly what they can do after they leave college.

- More students this year are benefiting from external work-placement opportunities, through which they develop employability skills. Construction students worked on an installation project in Spain to extend their vocational skills, while also broadening their knowledge of different cultures. Students benefit from working with experienced practitioners on local community-based projects, gaining valuable employability skills in teamwork and problem solving. In performing arts, students are working on a project commissioned by Manchester Camerata and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to produce and deliver a performance to raise awareness of the issues surrounding young people and road traffic collisions.
- Students participate in activities that enhance and extend learning in their vocational courses. For example, students benefit from participation in the provision of outstanding catering in high-profile settings, and others participate in external competitions which stretch their skill levels. Visiting practitioners enhance students' understanding of current industry practices and act as role models.
- Students have a good understanding of British values and the importance of these in everyday life. They understand the dangers of extremism and radicalisation and recognise how to keep themselves safe.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- College data show that the proportion of students who achieved their qualifications improved in 2014/15, but remained low for younger students. The proportion of apprentices who completed their full qualification increased in 2014/15 but remained low, as does the proportion who completed within the planned timescale. The progress that younger students and apprentices make towards achieving their targets and qualifications is often too slow.
- Too few students on English and mathematics courses achieve grades A*–C in GCSE examinations. Students do not develop English and mathematical skills sufficiently well in many vocational courses.
- Too few students and apprentices who complete qualifications progress to the next level. The proportion of intermediate-level students and apprentices who progress to advanced-level courses is particularly low.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs or disability who achieve qualifications was lower than for other students in 2014/15. Too few students with high needs made progress and moved into employment or further and higher education. Actions in place for this year have improved the situation, and the gap between outcomes for these students and those of their peers is closing.
- Adult students make good progress and achieve their targets. A high proportion of adult students achieved their level 2 qualifications in 2014/15. The proportion of students who gain qualifications is high in motor vehicle, plumbing, public services, sport and creative arts.
- Students and apprentices completing vocational courses develop good occupational skills and show confidence in applying them. The large majority of students and apprentices who leave college following successful completion of their courses progress to further learning or employment where they use the skills and knowledge that they have gained.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- The college provides one-year study programmes in a wide range of vocational subjects at all levels. The largest areas are electrical engineering, ICT, media, social care, public services and sport.
- Teachers' expectations of what their students should achieve are not always high enough, and consequently teachers' planning does not result in consistently good-quality learning. Teachers often do not offer extension activities to those who have finished tasks quickly, or where they do, these are not sufficiently stimulating, and therefore students' progress falters. Group learning is not well managed in many classes and too often a large number of students sit in class and do not participate in the group activity. Consequently, they do not develop their knowledge and skills.
- Too much teaching lacks pace and does not stimulate and engage all students. Teachers take insufficient account of individual students' needs, and do not build sufficiently well on what students already know and can do. In the better lessons, teachers encourage students to use and spell technical words through good reinforcement. Students increase their written and oral skills and vocabulary. Strength seen in teaching was where teachers built on opportunities to develop students' written and oral skills as well as extending students' confidence to use a range of technical or specialist terms.

- The majority of teachers of vocational courses correctly identify students' errors in spelling and grammar, but not all correct these effectively, and in a few instances, grammatical errors are missed, with the result that students repeat them. Where teaching and learning are good in English and mathematics, most students participate well, their knowledge is sequentially developed and they make good progress.
- The proportion of students who have successfully completed their qualifications on study programmes has improved over the last three years, but is not yet high enough. Staff have taken effective action to increase students' understanding of the importance of punctuality and attendance in the context of employability, and encourage students to take more responsibility for their own actions. This work has begun to have an impact in 2015/16. Attendance has improved in the current academic year but has still not reached the college target.
- Teachers' initial assessment of students' skills is accurate. Most students are placed on suitable courses and very few changes are made. Students on study programmes are enrolled on appropriate English and mathematics programmes. Work experience is planned for all students and many are already benefiting from the opportunities on offer. Many benefit from good in-course enrichment in sport. Construction students participated in a high-profile event with experienced workers which was broadcast on national television.
- Arrangements to monitor students' progress, introduced since the last inspection, are effective in the vast majority of cases. Staff and managers have been slow to identify a small minority of students who have fallen significantly behind in their work, but have now taken action to improve this. Work experience and enrichment are not yet fully integrated into the monitoring records.

Adult learning programmes

require improvement

- The college offers a range of adult learning provision, including short courses, distance learning, access to higher education, vocational courses, GCSE English and mathematics, and community learning courses. The large majority of adult students are on vocational courses.
- Few teachers routinely maximise the opportunities to develop students' English and mathematical skills in their sessions, so students do not make the progress they could in these subjects. The majority of adult students on discrete English and mathematics courses make progress from their starting points. However, the proportion of adult students achieving functional skills English and mathematics qualifications, and grades A*–C in GCSE mathematics, is too low.
- Teachers do not systematically promote diversity during sessions. Consequently, students' awareness of people's differences in modern Britain is underdeveloped.
- Managers and staff work effectively with the local enterprise partnership and employers to ensure that vocational provision is closely aligned with local needs. Since September 2015, no employability training provision for unemployed people has been offered, but managers are now planning to offer ICT courses for unemployed adults in conjunction with Jobcentre Plus.
- The college works closely with a wide range of partners, such as Warrington borough council, Warrington Disability Partnership and Warrington Voluntary Action, to engage with people who are disadvantaged. The college's community learning programme does not yet match the needs of the most disadvantaged groups in the area, but work is in progress to develop a programme that does.
- Teachers meet students' individual learning needs well during sessions. They use stimulating teaching and learning activities to motivate students. In an accountability session, students showed good understanding of how ethical principles such as confidentiality and objectivity can be compromised in a range of different scenarios. Teachers do not always take sufficient account of the needs of students who do not work as quickly as others. The tasks are too challenging for a few students and they do not make the progress they should. Teachers do not always use questions sufficiently well to gauge the quality of learning and progress in their sessions.
- On vocational and access to higher education programmes, teachers provide students with detailed written feedback that advises them well about the strengths and particular improvements they need to make to their work. The majority of teachers record students' progress and achievements accurately. Students have specific learning targets that teachers review and update regularly. As a result, the majority of students have a sound awareness of the progress they have made towards their targets. However, a minority of teachers do not identify and record students' progress and achievements sufficiently well to inform students about what they have achieved and what they still need to do to complete their course successfully.

- On vocational courses, students gain a range of skills that are useful in the workplace, such as preparing a wall for plastering, applying media make-up, and putting up a client's hair. Students develop their academic writing skills well on access to higher education programmes. A very high proportion of students on this programme progress to higher education.

Apprenticeships

require improvement

- Too many apprentices do not successfully complete their apprenticeship programmes, and too many of those who do complete do not do so within the planned timescale. A higher proportion of apprentices were successful in 2014/15 than in previous years, but the rate is still too low.
- Employers and apprentices benefit from effective induction, during which they are able to contribute to the planning of their programmes. Assessors carry out their review and assessment visits in a timely manner and employers are fully involved in the process. However, assessors do not always complete review records fully; they often focus too much on recording work completed since the previous review, rather than planning objectives to make sufficient progress over time to ensure completion of the overall framework.
- Teachers' expectations of apprentices are sometimes too low; a minority of apprentices in theory classes become bored, stop participating and do not make sufficient progress. Teachers do not routinely integrate mathematical skills into theory lessons, and this is reflected in the low success rates for functional skills. Off-the-job training for a very small minority of apprentices who do not attend college is not sufficiently well planned or designed to achieve clear and specific outcomes.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in practical sessions. Teachers plan these sessions well and use their skills to meet the individual needs of apprentices. They use individual learning targets effectively to challenge and stimulate both the most- and the least-able students in the group. Apprentices are encouraged by teachers to look critically at their own work and as a result produce work of a high standard. Teachers encourage students to demonstrate and explain skills to their peers; this effectively consolidates the learning of the most advanced students and supports the less able or inexperienced.
- Students benefit the most from teaching and reviews where teachers develop students' English skills through activities that sharpen written communication skills, and provide written feedback on work that shows students how to improve. Where this is done well, students are able to articulate how their written communication skills have improved as a result.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of how well they are progressing in practical skills development, assessed work and tests. The monitoring and review of progress by assessors are effective in enabling apprentices, employers and staff to recognise how well apprentices are doing, and to plan to meet further objectives. In the past, managers have not successfully monitored the progress of apprentices overall, or promptly identified those who are not meeting their progress targets. Following changes, this process is now improving.
- Apprentices and their employers value the skills they develop and recognise the breadth of employability skills, as well as technical and vocational skills, that prepare them for future work in their chosen occupation. Apprentices and employers value the good off-the-job training they receive at college and the way it supports their learning on the job. Employers recognise the contribution that apprentices make to their businesses.

Provision for learners with high needs

requires improvement

- The college currently provides for 79 students with high needs, over half of whom participate in mainstream provision. Significant changes have been made recently to the way in which the college organises the provision for students with high needs. Leaders and managers are clear about what they need to improve. Managers and staff fully share the vision for this work, and demonstrate a shared commitment and enthusiasm for change. Staff members fully support the recent restructure.
- Progress by students with high needs in discrete provision is often too slow. The proportion who complete accredited courses is low. Very few high-needs students completed work-experience placements in 2014/15. This lack of opportunities has been tackled by managers, and plans are in place to provide supported internships.

- Most high-needs students make good choices of learning programmes, and the large majority in mainstream provision make progress, achieve qualifications and move on to higher level courses. However, in 2015/16, fewer high-needs students in mainstream provision achieved qualifications or progressed to positive destinations than other students. Managers have recognised this underachievement, and have put in place actions to improve outcomes for high-needs students. Records in the current academic year indicate that these steps are improving the progress of these students.
- Teaching and learning are effective in encouraging students to improve their skills, develop new ones and to consider their progress over time. Teachers do not always encourage students to stretch themselves sufficiently, and to learn at a pace which would enable them to make more progress. Students in discrete provision are often able to identify their goals, but do not always understand how these translate into an individual learning programme.
- In discrete provision, aspects of the recording and assessment by teachers of students' progress and achievement are underdeveloped. Teachers do not always give sufficient recognition to personal and social development and to English and mathematics for a minority of students.
- All first-year students have an education, health and care plan, which provides a route to follow during college and beyond. However, plans for future progress beyond college are yet to be recorded for second- and third-year students who require their learning and disability assessment statements to be converted to the new format. Managers and staff have recognised this gap in planning and work is in progress to bring records up to date, and to ensure that reviews with students include discussion of their longer term goals.
- In discrete provision, behaviour in class and during breaks is appropriate and well supported, enabling students to integrate well into college life. Learning facilitators offer good support in class, and during breaktimes, enable students to make progress and integrate more effectively. Learning facilitators target their support well in class according to the needs of individual student. Progress coaches monitor attendance effectively; attendance in classes has improved and is now good.
- Arrangements for the way students move into the college provision are now good and working effectively. Good communication takes place with all feeder schools and high-needs coordinators.

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16–18 and 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,000
Principal and chief executive	Ms Nichola Newton
Website address	www.warrington.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number learners (excluding apprenticeships)	341	335	370	381	523	292	2	80
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	225	334	127	334	2	25		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14–16	–							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main sub-contractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Power in Partnership ■ Richmond Sports Coaching ■ MRHMC Ltd. 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

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Jill Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Kathy Passant	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Clayton	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah McGrath	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Brennan	Ofsted Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report, development plans and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the college.

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