

Short inspection of Worcester Sixth Form College

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 January 2023

Outcome

Worcester Sixth Form College continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Worcester Sixth Form College is a 16 to 19 academy for learners aged 16 to 19. It is part of the Heart of Mercia multi-academy trust. At the time of the inspection, 1648 learners were enrolled. Of these, 1597 learners were working towards a study programme at level 3 and the remainder at level 2. Almost half of these learners study a combination of A level subjects, choosing from 34 different subjects that are offered by the college. Around one-fifth of learners study one of the full-time level 3 vocational programmes in subjects such as business, health and social care, or sport. The remainder study a combination of A level and vocational programmes. There were 169 learners retaking a GCSE qualification in English or mathematics as part of their study programme. There were five learners who are in receipt of high needs funding.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners study a wide variety of subjects, allowing them to undertake a curriculum that supports them to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they require to be successful in the future. Learners are ambitious, committed to their learning and take pride in the work that they produce. They treat each other with high levels of mutual respect and appreciate the importance of diversity and community cohesion.

Learners are challenged to think deeply through the work that teachers provide. They respond positively to this challenge and produce work of a high quality. Relationships between staff and learners are focused clearly upon success. As a result, learners are motivated to achieve.

Learners communicate clearly and effectively with staff and each other. They use subject-specific, professional and technical vocabulary confidently. For example, A-level chemistry learners explain and recall their underpinning knowledge with precision, in relation to electronic configuration and the subsequent effect on chemical behaviours.

Learners attend well and are on time for lessons in most cases. However, those learners who are studying level 2 qualifications do not attend as well as their peers who study level 3 courses.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, managers and teachers ensure curriculums are coherently planned and ordered to enable learners to build upon prior knowledge and to develop the skills they require for future learning. For example, A-level physics learners initially study topics which are familiar to them from GCSE, such as the behaviour of waves, which allows them to move on to more demanding areas, such as simple harmonic motion. As a result, learners often improve on what they already know and can do, as they progress through their courses.

Teachers have expert knowledge of the subjects and courses they teach. Leaders ensure that teachers take clear actions to keep their knowledge and teaching skills up to date. For example, A-level psychology teachers attend sessions on the 'forgetting curve', which helps learners to improve their knowledge retrieval in lessons. Teachers impart this knowledge well in nearly all cases. As a result, learners produce work which is of a good quality and often above that of the level of study.

Teachers establish learners' starting points effectively. Learners on A-level psychology use 'bridging tasks' prior to undertaking their studies to ensure they can quickly access the taught curriculum. Teachers evaluate assessment performance successfully and use this to check understanding and plan future teaching. Consequently, learners quickly undertake additional tasks aimed at closing gaps in their knowledge.

Teachers present information and demonstrate practical activities to learners clearly. They check learners' understanding systematically and identify misconceptions effectively. Teachers use interactive quizzes and questioning techniques to ensure that learners are engaged and challenged. As a result, learners retain new material quickly and relate this well to their prior knowledge.

Teachers provide clear and direct feedback to learners in nearly all cases. Learners are clear what actions they need to take in order to be more successful. However, in a few cases, teachers fail to check well enough whether learners have acted on their feedback in a swift time frame. Therefore, it is not always clear whether all learners have made sufficient progress in remedying any gaps in their learning.

Teachers design and use activities to help learners remember long-term content effectively. Learners undertake practice tasks to further embed understanding frequently. For example, A-level physics learners reapply their understanding of circuit construction to later topics, such as electrical field theory and capacitors. As a result, learners can recall prior knowledge fluently and flexibly.

Teachers create environments that allow learners to focus on learning. Classroom environments are purposeful and well resourced with materials that are of a high quality and of an industry standard. Learners use these resources skilfully to further develop their understanding and knowledge.

Leaders and managers have put in place appropriate careers support that allows learners to move into further education and training successfully, in most cases. The college careers leads and staff are appropriately qualified, and support those learners who wish to progress to university effectively. Leaders have put in place additional actions to support those learners who wish to move on to apprenticeships. However, it is too soon to assess the impact of these actions in ensuring that learners move on to their desired next steps.

Leaders ensure that there are opportunities available to enrich the curriculums that learners follow. Learners experience guest speakers, work experience placements, and clubs and societies. As a result, learners in some cases develop useful additional skills and behaviours. For example, health and social care learners access a six-week study programme on clinical skills that enhances their practical skills successfully. However, learner attendance to these activities is not consistently high. Consequently, too few learners benefit from opportunities to broaden their skills development. Learners are unable to detail with clarity how these activities support them in their long-term skills development.

Teachers ensure that learners develop detailed knowledge across the curriculum. Learners achieve well in nearly all cases, across all areas of their study. They make sustained progress from their identified starting points successfully. As a result, a very large number of them move on to study at their first-choice university.

Leaders and managers take clear actions to assess the quality of the education that learners receive. As a result, they are aware of their areas of strength and weakness. Leaders ensure that the arrangements for governance are effective in providing appropriate scrutiny. Governors know the college well and have extensive experience of the post-16 sector. They use this experience to review the quality of education at the college and to support leaders to make continuous improvements and manage change effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that those with responsibilities for safeguarding, such as the designated safeguarding lead are knowledgeable and undertake frequent training to be able to carry out their roles effectively. When appointing new staff, leaders take clear actions to make sure they are suitable to work with learners. Leaders have put in place appropriate systems to record and monitor safeguarding concerns; these cases are managed and monitored to an appropriate resolution.

Learners feel safe and are aware of the actions they need to take to report any concerns. Leaders and teachers ensure that learners have a broad awareness of contemporary issues such as positive and healthy relationships and the dangers of harmful sexual behaviours. However, learners do not have a sufficiently developed understanding of the dangers that they may face in their local areas in relation to radical and extremist behaviours.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that learners undertake high-quality work-related activity in a more meaningful way, to ensure that learners are able to appreciate the skills they are developing and how they are transferable to a range of further qualifications and careers.
- Teachers should ensure all learners act on their feedback successfully, so that gaps in their knowledge and understanding are successfully closed.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners studying level 2 qualifications attend their learning more frequently to develop the knowledge and skills required to achieve their best.
- Leaders and teachers should ensure that learners' understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism in their locality is continually developed throughout their courses, so that they can apply this to their daily lives.

Provider details

Unique reference number	144888
Address	Spetchley Road Worcester Worcestershire WR5 2LU
Contact number	01905362600
Website	www.wsfc.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Ed Senior
Provider type	16 to 19 academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal for curriculum, quality and implementation, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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