



West Nottinghamshire College

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**Better  
education  
and care**

## Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published April 2007	Provider reference 130777
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## Introduction

West Nottinghamshire College was inspected in January 2005. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas inspected, except in work-based learning (WBL) areas business administration and law and engineering, technology and manufacturing which were found to be less than satisfactory. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is less than satisfactory within two years of the original inspection. If inadequate areas of learning or aspects of provision remain inadequate following re-inspection, inspectors will continue to monitor progress at annual assessment visits, but the areas will not be re-graded. They will be re-inspected during the full college inspection.

The less than satisfactory WBL areas were re-inspected 13 and 14 March 2007. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Work-based learning area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	4	2

## Context

The college offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in mechanical, electrical, automotive engineering and apprenticeships, in partnership with Trackworks, in railway engineering. There are currently, 106 apprentices and 16 advanced apprentices.

### *Strengths*

- high success rates for apprentices
- good learning resources
- good teaching and learning
- effective strategies leading to improvements.

### *Areas for improvement*

- poor target setting in students' progress reviews.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on all programmes have improved since the last inspection. The success rate for apprentices has risen from 0% in 2003/04 to 84% in 2005/06. The upward trend in success rates is reflected in the current in year figures that indicate a further improvement in success rates. The success rate for advanced apprentices is slightly below

the national average but has risen from 0% in 2003/04 to 45% in 2005/06. Learners produce work to a high standard for their technical certificate, key skills and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) portfolios. Progression from apprenticeships programmes to advanced apprenticeships is low but improving.

### Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are good. Feedback from internal lesson observations suitably challenges teachers and instructors to continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning. Learners are keen to participate in lessons and good use is made of the learners own work experience to illustrate engineering applications. Engineering learning resources are good. As reported in the previous inspection, custom-built accommodation houses the latest technology in computer-aided machine tools and coordinate measuring machines, rapid prototype and injection moulding machines. The motor vehicle workshop contains a wide range of good working vehicles and simulation systems. Laptop computers use wireless technology to connect to the college network and the internet. The learning resource centre in the centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) is small and opening times continue to be restricted.

Assessments are well planned and internal verification is robust. Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Improved recruitment and initial assessment procedures ensure learners are working at the correct level. However, target setting in students' reviews and within learners independent learning plans is poor and does not sufficiently challenge or give guidance to help learners to progress. The provision offered is well matched to the needs of local employers. There are good links with employers and many take a full and active part in the apprenticeship progress reviews.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. There is also good communication within engineering. Very effective strategies have been used to improve success rates since the last inspection. Regular team meetings are held and clear actions for improvement are agreed and implemented. Learner progress is tracked well and discussed at monthly team meetings and positive actions are monitored. The restructuring of the engineering curriculum area has had a positive effect and has aided in raising achievements in work-based learning, particularly for apprentices. Staff contribute to self assessment through course reviews and team meetings. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate.

Work-based learning area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Business administration and law	4	3

### Context

The college offers work-based learning programmes in administration and accounting and finance. There are currently 17 learners following the apprenticeship framework in administration and 8 in accounting and finance. There are 3 advanced apprentices.

### *Strengths*

- high success rates for advanced apprentices
- good use of management information to track learner progress.

### *Areas for improvement*

- slow progress for apprentices
- insufficiently challenging targets in students' progress reviews.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for learners on apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks have improved since the last inspection. Success rates for advanced apprentices have increased significantly over the last three years from 17% in 2003/04 to 69% in 2005/06 and are now well above the national average. The success rate for full framework achievement for apprentices declined in 2004/05 to 18% but improved in 2005/06 to 58%. This is below the national average and represents the largest number of learners. Apprentices do not make sufficient progress to achieve framework success on time. Learners develop a range of practical skills which they use in the workplace. Attendance is satisfactory.

### Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers use relevant materials to prepare learners for assessment. Learners work well during class based activities. However, in some cases, judgements about learning from internal lesson observations do not always provide tutors with detailed feedback to enable them to improve. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners receive regular visits from assessors and teachers give appropriate written feedback on completed work. Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Target

setting for learners is weak, targets are too general and not sufficiently challenging for learners. Focused and time bound targets are not used systematically in learner reviews. Learners' complete initial assessments at the start of their programme and the results of these are used effectively to plan arrangements for support.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The course teams have taken significant actions to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. There is good use of management information to track the progress of learners. Data is used effectively to help staff target actions to improve learner success. Some of these actions have resulted in significant improvements in success rates. Curriculum area staff meet regularly with the work-based learning team and share good practice. There is effective communication within the team. The self-assessment report for 2005/06 is generous in its judgements about strengths and weaknesses.

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: West Nottinghamshire College  
Date of visit: 13-14 March 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

### Achievement and standards

What does the college data for 2005/06 indicate about current performance?

- The college data indicates it continues to maintain a high level of performance in 2006. The headline success rate of 85% is well above the national average. For learners aged 16 to 18 success rates at level 1 and 2 for long courses are well above national averages. At level 3, success rates have declined and are below national averages. This is mainly due to declining pass rates at AS and A level. For adult learners all success rates are well above national averages.
- The college recognises in its self-assessment report the need to improve AS and A level pass rates. AS pass rates declined to 59% in 2005/06. A number of effective actions to address the issues and improve provision have been taken. All A levels and GCSEs are now managed in a single school of learning and provision has moved to the main site. The new school of academic studies is undergoing a year of consolidation while significant changes and improvements are made. Poorly performing courses have been withdrawn and replaced by an increase in learner choice via the local consortium arrangements. A revised learning package is now in place with further developments for 2007/08. The creation of learning zones and input of learning consultants is starting to have an impact. Current college data indicates improvements in retention which compare very favourably with figures from this time last year. Particular attention has been paid to the learner voice with monthly learner forums and rapid feedback of the issues raised.
- The small sample of AS and A level learners interviewed during the visit speak highly of their flexible and supportive tutors. They feel they have access to good resources including specialist resources for the visually impaired. Learners felt they received a good induction to their programmes, were well taught and their progress was well monitored.

They are prepared well for exams and appreciated the flexible approach to exams that allowed them to focus more clearly on their grades. Some learners were re-sitting courses to attain higher grades for entry into university. Learners were less positive about key skills which they felt were not clearly understood and were viewed as a distraction from their main courses. Learners felt that they had good access to enrichment activities and that there was a good variety. However, most learners felt that did not have a good understanding of what was offered and could benefit from a 're-launch' at different times throughout the year. Many learners felt that there was a good variety of visits organised for them by their tutors.

- Key skills success rates show an improving trend and are above national averages, particularly at level 1 and 2 where there are substantial numbers of learners. At level 3 learner numbers are small, pass rates continue to be poor at 5%.
- Significant progress has been made since the last inspection in the area of work-based learning (WBL). Overall apprenticeship framework success rates have increased from 35% in 2004/05 to 71% in 2005/06 which is well above the national rate. Timely success rates have also increased and are now broadly average. Overall advanced apprenticeship framework success rates have increased from 22% in 2004/05 to 44% in 2005/06 which is line with the national average. Recent Local Learning and Skills Council data for 2006/07 indicates that an increasing number of leavers are achieving a full apprenticeship framework at around 85% and the upward trend for advanced apprenticeship completions is at 50%. Progression from level 2 to level 3 programmes has improved from 56% in 2004/05 to 81% in 2005/06.

## Quality of education and training

How effective is 14 to 16 provision and 14 to 19 collaboration?

- The college continues to maintain very good links with local schools. It has further developed its provision for learners aged 14 to 16 to include a programme for excluded learners. There are also a number of discrete provision projects with schools which includes a horticulture project with learners who have learning difficulties and disabilities. A dedicated team manage the school partnership work very effectively with many key policies and procedures in place to ensure effective communication with schools. The college is an active member of the Mansfield and Ashfield area strategy groups, a key partner in the bids for the specialised

diplomas. College data shows a three year improving trend for success rates. Retention and pass rates are high. In 2006 some 40% of learners progressed onto full-time college courses. Individual learners have received recognition for their success and received awards such as the Nottinghamshire Training Network WBL Pre -16 award.

## Progress with literacy and numeracy support

- The college significantly re-organised its Skills for Life provision. Specialist tutors are 'embedded' in curriculum teams across the college to provide more flexible, timely and appropriate support for both learners and staff. All new college staff are required to have appropriate level 2 qualifications and an 'upskilling' programme for existing staff has been introduced. Although the Skills for Life team are dispersed, it is managed centrally and benefits from good communications, a good range of expertise and the development of tracking software. All learners benefit from early diagnostic testing that is undertaken before joining the college. The college recognises in its self-assessment report that 42 learners receiving literacy and numeracy support for 6 or more hours in 2005/06 is low. In 2006/07 the number receiving literacy and numeracy support has risen to 60. However, the college also recognises that 121 learners are also benefiting from the introduction of specialised staff to support learners diagnosed with dyslexia.

## Leadership and management

### Update on operational and strategic planning

- The college is committed to an exciting, comprehensive major new building programme designed to provide the local community and business with a purpose built college offering an increased range of courses and programmes. A new senior management team has been assembled to deliver the project that is planned to be completed in September 2010. This represents a major re-alignment of the college's strategic direction from the last inspection visit and may involve some rationalisation of the college's existing accommodation. Marketing strategies have been introduced to increase local awareness and to further develop employer engagement and commitment and international links have been established to further the college's desire to engage in 'world class' activities and events. A smaller project has been established for the construction department that will be used to test and develop

teaching and learning techniques and strategies in advance of the major building programme. The senior management team are keen to encourage all college tutors and managers to explore and exploit new teaching and learning opportunities and to design them into the new building.

Is the 2005/06 self-assessment report rigorous?

- Based on the evidence seen during the visit the 2005/06 self-assessment report provides a clear and accurate overview of the college's position on major areas. The report is concise and evaluative. The college engages in a peer review process with external colleges and is involved in a number of projects. These have been beneficial for the college in identifying best practice and areas for improvement. The college uses this approach as a mechanism to evaluate and improve performance and inform its self assessment judgements, particularly the judgement on capacity to improve. The college has made good progress in addressing the Every Child Matters outcomes and has given it high priority. However, the evidence in the self assessment focuses on provision and not outcomes and does not make judgements about the impact of the provision. The analysis of achievement and standards does not consider data on attendance, high grades, rates of progression to further and higher education and employment and the standards of learner work.

