



# Worthing College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published May 2007	Provider reference 130845
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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Worthing College
Type of college:	Sixth Form
Principal:	Peter Corrigan
Address of college:	Bolsover Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN13 1NS
Telephone number:	01903 243389
Fax number:	01903 243390
Chair of governors:	Lance Allen
Unique reference number:	130845
Name of lead inspector:	Alan Marsh, HMI
Dates of inspection:	19 -23 March 2007

## Background of the organisation

1. Worthing College is a medium-sized sixth form college located in a coastal borough 56 miles from London. It has an estimated population of just over 100,000. In recent years, Worthing has benefited from the health of the local economy around Brighton and Hove, enabling business growth to continue. The public sector and the financial and business sector are the largest employers in Worthing. There is very low unemployment in Worthing, with a current unemployment rate of 1.5%. The area is relatively affluent, although there are pockets of deprivation along the coastal strip and the district suffers some of the instabilities of seaside towns, with significant seasonal variations in populations and short-term employment.
2. The educational landscape in Worthing and its hinterland is mixed: there are four schools for students aged 12-16 and one for students aged 11-16; five schools with their own sixth forms, two schools for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and two further education colleges: Worthing College (a sixth form college) and Northbrook College (a general further education college). The proportion of young people in Worthing who stay on in education or training at age 16 is high against the national average, but below the rate for West Sussex.
3. Worthing College offers provision in 11 of the 15 sector/subject areas with the majority of provision being at level 3. The college had 1,627 students on roll in 2004/05 (representing 8,690 enrolments), of whom 1,227 were aged 16-18. This was a decline of 20% in 2003/04, and in 2005/06 this total fell again slightly to 1,573; but the college has exceeded its recruitment targets in two of the last three years, including 2006/07. Most students aged 16-18 study at level 3, and very few at level 1; most adults study at level 2, mostly part time. The college runs a public services course at level 1 for some 26 school students aged 14-16. The proportion of students in the college from minority ethnic backgrounds is 12%, compared to 5% in the local population. In 2005/06, 34% of students were enrolled on a vocational course.

## Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); the college's most recent self-assessment report (SAR) and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and students' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
  - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
  - achievements and standards
  - quality of provision
  - leadership and management.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

*Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.*

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. This is a good college. Between 2004/05 and 2005/06, success rates improved at all levels of qualification for both short and long courses and they are above the national averages on long qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. Success rates for the large majority of students who are on General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS and A level courses have improved steadily over the last three years from 2003/04. Students achieve their predicted grade or better in almost all subjects. Key skills achievements remain low.
6. Teaching and learning are good. The college accurately identifies the strengths and weaknesses in much of its teaching and learning and is working diligently to raise further the quality of students' experience in lessons. Learning resources are satisfactory; some specialist resources are good but much accommodation is poor. Students increasingly benefit from a well-developed computer-based bank of learning materials. Initial assessment successfully identifies the nature and extent of support that students require when they join the college. The development of students' independent learning skills is hampered by some teachers' reluctance to encourage students to question and challenge both themselves and each other.
7. The college has, by cautious innovation, developed a good, broad curriculum which is responsive to the needs of the local community. Relationships with the other college serving the area are genuinely collaborative. The college is a diverse and equitable community and makes a good response to educational and social inclusion.
8. Students receive very good guidance and support. Individual tutorials help students take responsibility for their own learning, although group tutorials are ineffective. Careers and progression guidance is good, as is the provision of specific welfare services.
9. Leadership and management are good. The college has significantly improved retention, success rates and the general quality of teaching and learning. Self-assessment is robust, astute and accurate and has made a substantial contribution to how the college has gone about its assiduous drive to improve. Middle managers are closely involved in realising senior leaders' strategic vision. Although many governors are new, they are already knowledgeable and are highly supportive. Much accommodation remains in need of improvement.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

10. The college has good capacity to improve. Since the last inspection, the senior management team has demonstrated its ability to raise student achievement. Success rates have risen and in 2005/06 they were above the national averages for 2004/05 at all levels of qualification. Strategies to improve retention have

been successful. The college has widened its curriculum to include more courses at level 2. Quality assurance, informed by reliable data, is good and the self-assessment report provides a very accurate assessment of the college's performance. With plans to rebuild the college and to re-structure management roles, the college has set itself ambitious targets for the next few years.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

11. The college has successfully remedied weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection and consolidated its strengths. With a clear focus on improvement, success rates have risen, teaching has improved and quality assurance systems have been refined. Although the college has continued to invest in resources and facilities, much accommodation remains poor.

Key strengths of the college

*Strengths*

- high and improving success rates
- much good teaching and learning
- wide range of courses, responding to local needs
- very good enrichment activities
- very good guidance and support
- effective use of information by managers
- strong culture of improvement.

Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- low success rates in key skills
- under-developed independent learning skills
- ineffectiveness of group tutorials
- poor accommodation.

## Main findings

### Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

12. Achievements and standards are good. In 2005/06, overall success rates were 85%, which is above the national average for sixth form colleges. Between 2004/05 and 2005/06, success rates, improved at all levels of qualification for both short and long courses; they are above the national averages on long qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. Success rates have improved in 10 of the 11 sector/subject areas.
13. Both retention and pass rates improved at all levels for students aged 16-18 between 2004/05 and 2005/06. Pass rates at level 3 for these students, which represent by far the largest number of students in the college, have improved consistently over the last three years. There has been sustained improvement in GCE AS and A level success rates over this period: in 2005/06, overall success rates on GCE AS and A level courses were 2% above the previous year's national average of 86% for similar colleges. The proportion of students who gain high grades A or B at GCE A level rose steadily over the 3 years 2002/03 to 2004/05, and although it declined slightly in 2005/06 to 48%, this is still 8% above the previous year's national average. Success rates on a small minority of GCE AS and A level subjects are below national averages.
14. Students make the progress expected of them on many GCE AS and A level subjects when their prior attainment is taken into account and this is improving. The number of subjects in which students achieve above their predicted grades has increased over the last three years and there are now very few subjects in which students fail to achieve their predicted grades.
15. In-year retention in 2006/07 has improved at all course levels and for both age groups when compared with the same period in the previous year and at the time of the inspection was good at 92%. Attendance at lessons is also good at 93%.
16. The college has successfully narrowed the gap between the success rates of male and female students. The success rate for male students aged 16-18 improved significantly between 2004/05 and 2005/06, from 74% to 83%, some 5% below the success rate for female students. The success rates for most minority ethnic groups have improved and in 2005/06, the success rates for most ethnic groups were similar. However, the success rates of students of Black African heritage were notably lower than those of other ethnic groups.
17. There has been insufficient improvement in the achievement of key skills qualifications, and most success rates remain low.
18. The standard of students' work is at least satisfactory and much is good.

### Quality of provision

Good: grade 2



19. The college accurately judges that its teaching and learning are good. Teachers make good, flexible use of the college's timetable which demands a variety of approaches from teachers and enables students to undertake extended activities. Stimulating activities start many lessons and teachers set clear objectives and expectations. Students often work in pairs or small groups, although not all teachers structure these activities to the best purpose. Many teachers make effective use of learning technologies, including a computer-based repository for curriculum materials which students find very helpful. Teachers know and support their students very well and pay close attention to their individual learning needs. Students appreciate this and respond well. For example, in one outstanding physical education lesson the teacher skilfully used a wide range of approaches to elicit answers from students as she constantly checked their understanding and reinforced key technical vocabulary.
20. The college has improved the quality of teaching significantly since the last inspection. The internal teaching and learning observation scheme provides a clear and reliable evaluation of current practice and quality. It is thoroughly moderated both within and without the college. Feedback to teachers and subsequent training are sensitive and helpful; teachers' own professional strengths are built on to further their skills. Inspectors carried out a number of joint lesson observations with the college's observers and there was a very close agreement on the quality and characteristics of teaching and learning. Good practice is shared both formally through training sessions that focus on key themes and informally through subject team meetings.
21. Procedures for the initial assessment of students are thorough and timely. The results of assessment are effectively used to identify those students who need support or further diagnosis. Almost all students thus identified avail themselves of this additional support outside lessons and consequently make good progress. Support in lessons is also provided as required to students on courses at levels 1 and 2.
22. The assessment of work is fair and accurate. The majority of marking and feedback on students' work is detailed with constructive comments that help students improve.
23. In a significant minority of lessons, teachers underestimate what students might learn from each other and so do not plan activities in which their potential contributions are given full measure. Many of these lessons are satisfactory but they lack dynamism and a sense of adventure and students rarely question teachers or each other. Consequently, in these lessons students' independent thinking skills do not develop as fully as they might and their learning is restricted to what teachers have decided they need to learn.
24. Learning resources are satisfactory. Many curriculum areas have created a strong subject identity and make good use of the resources available. The central library is well stocked and used. Students have good access to computers. Much accommodation, however, is poor and limits what some students might do or learn.

25. The college offers a good range of courses and responds well to local circumstances. Most students are able to follow their choice of courses, particularly at level 3, where there are 38 AS and A level courses and 5 full vocational courses available. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. It has increased its provision of level 1 and level 2 courses since the previous inspection, helping to meet the changing local demand. There is a well-established and successful public services course for school students aged 14-16, with many students continuing to study at the college beyond the age of 16. The effective and growing collaboration with the local general further education college ensures that a wide and coherent range of vocational and academic courses is available to students. A vibrant enrichment programme, recently relaunched as 'College +', makes a valuable contribution to students' enjoyment and achievement. It offers a very good range of activities, including sports, music and drama, placements with voluntary organisations and an effective work experience scheme. Students on vocational courses have work experience built into their timetables. There are plans to add to a successful rugby academy four further sporting academies for boys' and girls' football, mixed hockey and netball. A review of key skills, compulsory for students at level 2, has led to a more selective entry to assessments for students at level 3 but success rates remain very low.
26. The college's advice and guidance for students are very good. The prospectuses, website, course leaflets and other publicity materials ensure that applicants are well informed about the college's courses and ethos. Links with local schools are effective. The admissions system, including substantial interviews, clear and fair entry criteria and screening tests to identify any additional learning needs, is geared well to the wide range of students applying to the college. Students appreciate the well-planned induction procedures and feel thoroughly supported during their transition to college. The educational maintenance allowance system from which many students benefit, is very well managed. As a result of the good guidance they receive, a small and reducing number of students change their course after the start of the academic year.
27. There are good arrangements for individual tutorial support and students' progress is regularly reviewed in personal interviews. These relationships are established strongly by conscientious, solicitous tutors who keep a very close eye on students' attendance and any welfare or personal issues that may impede their progress. However, group tutorials are less effective and are often not a good use of time. The college rightly recognises that it needs to improve its arrangements for checking on the value and impact of this aspect of the recently-revised tutorial system. The college maintains good records of students' progress and attendance. There are effective systems for providing specialist support for students, including counselling and welfare services, often involving external organisations. Students receive good careers guidance from college staff, supported by a well-stocked careers library, but Connexions advisers have insufficient time to provide the specialist guidance needed by many level 3 students. Support for transition at the age of 18 is good and there are well-organised progression events. However, the proportion of students who go on to higher education is low at around 50%. There is an active

students' union and the college is seeking additional ways of consulting students about college decisions that affect them. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the college and the wider community. Space for students to meet at break times and lunchtime is inadequate.

## Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

28. Leadership and management are good. The strategic direction of the college is clearly defined, understood by staff and supported by governors. Management activities focus very specifically on raising students' achievements. The significantly improved success rates in 2005/06 reflect the impact of the many initiatives put in place over the last few years. Middle managers play a pivotal role in putting the strategic vision into practice. They are actively involved in negotiating targets at course level, drawing on a range of evidence sources, whilst remaining mindful of the college's ambitious targets and determination to continue to raise standards.
29. Quality assurance systems are consistently applied across the college. While they have led to improvements in many aspects of the college's work, weaknesses in the quality of tutorial provision remain. Areas identified as weaknesses in the last inspection have been remedied. Detailed and evaluative course reviews inform the very accurate and insightful self-assessment report: inspectors agree with all the main judgements made by the college. Staff at all levels have good access to the statistical information they need to monitor performance. Staff act swiftly when students are at risk of falling behind with their studies and interventions are rigorous and supportive. When quality improvement measures continue to fail to bring about sufficient improvements, courses are closed.
30. The internal lesson observation system provides an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and the college's own analysis indicates that teaching continues to improve. An effective staff appraisal system, tightly linked to college-wide objectives, makes a significant contribution to the strong drive for improvement. Staff development is well linked to the college's strategic aims, as well as meeting individual's development needs where possible.
31. Equal opportunities and diversity policies have begun to have a distinctive impact on staff and student practice and there is evidence of active promotion of good race relations. Overall, the college's response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is satisfactory. While reasonable efforts have been made to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002, some of the campus remains inaccessible to students with mobility difficulties, as it was at the time of the last inspection.
32. Accommodation remains in need of improvement. Although there has been ongoing investment in the site since the last inspection, cramped classrooms and limited facilities in some areas often restrict what teachers and students can do. Students remain concerned about the lack of social space. Plans are in place to demolish the current site and rebuild the college.

33. The college works effectively with other organisations, including schools, colleges, parents and some businesses and community organisations, reflecting its commitment to be responsive to local needs. Child protection procedures are in place to ensure the well-being and safety of students. The majority of staff have been trained on the implications of recent legislation. Governors have discussed and approved the child protection policy but they have not had specific training on their responsibilities in relation to this legislation.
34. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the college's mission. Although most governors are new to their role, they are knowledgeable about their statutory duties and are sufficiently challenging of the senior management team. Financial management is effective and, with staffing and other resources deployed effectively to support educational priorities, the college provides good value for money.

## Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

16-18						19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	03/04	46	78	67	11	-	-	-	-
	04/05	69	65	64	1	-	-	-	-
	05/06	184	80	-	-	-	-	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	-	-	-	-				
	04/05	-	-	-	-				
	05/06	-	-	-	-				
NVQs	03/04	-	-	-	-				
	04/05	-	-	-	-				
	05/06	-	-	-	-				
Other	03/04	46	78	67	11				
	04/05	69	65	64	1				
	05/06	184	80	-	-				

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

16-18						19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	03/04	383	74	74	0	18	75	55	20
	04/05	435	72	73	-1	15	52	55	-3
	05/06	1839	80	-	-	253	63	-	-
GCSEs	03/04	207	81	77	4	18	78	62	16
	04/05	221	71	78	-7	15	80	65	15
	05/06	232	83	-	-	25	71	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	70	81	72	9	-	-	-	-
	04/05	54	76	74	2	-	-	-	-
	05/06	752	78	-	-	76	76	-	-
NVQs	03/04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	04/05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	03/04	106	58	68	-10	-	-	-	-
	04/05	160	73	62	11	-	-	-	-
	05/06	855	78	-	-	152	75	-	-

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2004 to 2006, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

16-18						19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	03/04	3283	79	80	-1	69	76	57	19
	04/05	3193	80	82	-2	58	62	59	3
	05/06	3031	85	-	-	85	81	-	-
A/A2 Levels	03/04	1045	90	91	-1	34	91	75	16
	04/05	981	95	92	3	25	76	76	0
	05/06	962	94	-	-	32	87	-	-
AS Levels	03/04	2035	73	76	-3	35	63	52	11
	04/05	2030	73	78	-5	33	46	54	-8
	05/06	2011	81	-	-	53	77	-	-
GNVQs and precursors	03/04	203	79	68	11	-	-	-	-
	04/05	177	76	75	1	-	-	-	-
	05/06	58	95	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQs	03/04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	04/05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	03/04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	04/05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	05/06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-