

# Warwickshire College

Inspection report

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

#### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. Warwickshire College is one of the largest general further education (GFE) colleges in the country. It occupies six separate campuses as a result of a series of three mergers in 12 years, the most recent of which saw the college merge with the Pershore campus of the Pershore Group of Colleges in August 2007. Other campuses are located in Leamington Spa, Rugby, Henley-in-Arden, Moreton Morrell and the Trident Technology and Business Centre in the south of Leamington Spa. The college also operates from a wide network of outreach centres. The college has a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in engineering, is a major partner in national CoVEs in equine and in farriery, and is a partner in sub-regional CoVEs in maintenance and construction and in leadership and management.
2. The college primarily serves the towns and villages of central, eastern and southern Warwickshire, but some of its provision, particularly in land-based industries, recruits nationally. The immediate catchment area of the college is relatively prosperous. The unemployment rate of 1.7% in Warwickshire is lower than the national rate of around 2.3%. The percentage of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including mathematics and English, is slightly above the national average at 48%. Some 10% of learners are of minority ethnic heritage, compared with 5% in the local community.
3. Warwickshire College offers courses in all 15 sector subject areas leading to qualifications ranging from pre-entry level to higher education (HE). The college enrolled about 13,548 individual learners in 2006/07. Of these, around 27% were aged 16 to 18. Some 9,186 adult learners were enrolled on part-time courses, mostly at level 1 or level 2. The college also enrolled 865 learners aged 14 to 16 on a range of programmes provided in collaboration with local schools. Apprenticeship programmes are provided for around 700 work-based learners.
4. The college identifies three core values which are: 'to put the learner first; to deliver the highest quality in all that we do; and to promote a fair, open and respectful culture.'

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: Contributory Grade 1</i>

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. The college assessed the effectiveness of its provision as outstanding and inspectors agreed. Strategic leadership and governance are outstanding. The recent merger has been managed successfully and surveys reveal learners' increased satisfaction at the Pershore campus. The college's core values are promoted successfully through all aspects of its business and its approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. The engagement of learner representatives in developing the college is exceptional. Curriculum management, including the management of work-based learning is good, but is less effective in a minority of sector subject areas.
6. Work with employers is outstanding and the college's CoVEs promote excellent provision and practice. The college enjoys a national reputation for employer engagement and employer satisfaction is high. The current excellent range of provision has been planned carefully to address local and national skills shortages, as well as to provide opportunities for learners who are currently under-represented in further education (FE).
7. Achievement and standards are good and have improved since the last inspection. Success rates on level 1 courses in particular are high but the college knows that success rates on level 3 courses require further improvement. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a good mix of activities to engage and motivate learners, although in a minority of lessons the most able learners do not receive work which stretches them sufficiently. Assessment procedures are good and on the majority of courses are used well to plan future progress. In a minority of areas, learners are less clear of what they need to do to improve.
8. There are outstanding arrangements to provide academic and pastoral support for those learners who need it most. Success rates show that learners in receipt of this support make excellent progress. The college offers some excellent accommodation, including such unusual features as a fully equipped health spa. Some of the accommodation at Pershore and Rugby do not currently provide learners with the facilities they require, but the college has plans to remedy this. Learners are highly satisfied with their experiences at the college and consider it a very safe and enjoyable place to study.

### Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

9. The college demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. There is a four year rising trend in the key measures of success rates, attendance, punctuality, retention and pass rates, student satisfaction, and progression to HE and employment. The leadership team provides a strong drive for improvement and are supported by a robust quality improvement system. Self-assessment

procedures are rigorous and the current self-assessment report is comprehensive and accurate.

10. Development and improvement plans and policies, particularly in relation to new initiatives, provide a strong basis for continuing improvement. College plans are supported by and are consistent with LSC and national priorities. Accommodation and facilities are good overall and outstanding in several areas. Financial resources for further improvements are good. Management information is very good, trusted and used well by staff to support actions for improvement.

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

11. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The level of achievement on modern apprenticeships is now high and most learners complete their framework in the agreed time. Retention rates have improved overall and are now satisfactory. Success rates in key skills have improved significantly but the college is aware that the current satisfactory levels of performance should be improved still further.

### Key strengths

- outstanding strategic leadership and governance
- highly successful promotion of the college's core values through all aspects of its business
- outstanding employer engagement
- excellent response to equality and diversity
- outstanding procedures to capture the views of learners and to incorporate them into the work of the college
- successful management of merger
- excellent success rates on courses at level 1
- highly effective teaching and learning
- excellent range of provision
- outstanding support for those learners who most need it
- some outstanding specialist accommodation and resources.

### Areas for improvement

- effectiveness of curriculum management in a minority of sector subject areas
- success rates on courses at level 3
- monitoring of learners' progress on a minority of courses
- accommodation at Pershore and Rugby.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

12. Achievement and standards are good. This agrees with the college's own assessment. Most success rates have improved and are now at, or above average on courses at all levels and for all age groups. The rise in success rates is reflected in most sector subject areas and retention rates, an area for improvement at the last inspection, are now satisfactory. The success rate for courses at level 1 has shown the most significant increase and is now high. Although the success rate at GCE A level increased in 2006/07, the overall success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses declined slightly in 2006/07. Learners on level 3 courses made the progress expected of them based on their starting points and the proportion of high grades they achieved was satisfactory.
13. The college's largest groups of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds are of Chinese and Indian origin and both groups make very good progress. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also do well and those with moderate and severe learning difficulties achieve excellent results. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are good and many of these learners progress to higher level courses at the college. Progression rates within the college, and from the college to higher education and employment, are high. Key skills results have improved significantly and are now satisfactory. Standards in work-based learning are good. The number of learners who complete their framework successfully and within the agreed time is high, although the college recognises that successful completions on the advanced framework, currently below average, requires further improvement.
14. Learners take great pride in their work and their progress and standards are good. The college equips learners well for their transition into employment and provides abundant opportunities for those in employment to improve their job performance. The number of learners who achieve national representative honours in competitive sports and recognition in national competitions is a feature of the college, and widely celebrated. Attendance is good and demonstrates consistent improvement.

### Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

15. Inspectors agree with the college's own judgement that the quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good. The college's strong focus on improving teaching and learning is supported well by lesson observation procedures which identify accurately key strengths and areas for improvement. Lesson observations are analysed thoroughly and provide a reliable source of information to identify staff training needs. Advanced teaching practitioners are deployed throughout the college and have proved effective in disseminating outstanding practice.



16. Teachers are well qualified, plan their lessons carefully and use a good mix of activities to engage and motivate learners. They use questioning techniques skilfully and make imaginative use of groupwork to develop independent thinking. Although most lessons successfully meet the needs of learners, some of the most able learners are not always provided with work which challenges or stretches them sufficiently. Learners who require extra help with their work are provided with a wide range of additional learning support. Learners who receive this support make excellent progress and speak highly of how it has helped them improve. Information learning technology (ILT) is being used increasingly effectively to aid learning and the college's virtual learning environment is proving a valuable resource in the sector subject areas where its development is most advanced.
17. Assessment procedures are good. Most assignments have clear assessment criteria, are returned promptly on completion and with constructive feedback for learners. In most sector subject areas, assessment is used well to plan future progress and set increasingly specific and challenging targets. However, in the minority of areas where this is not the case, targets are sometimes imprecise and learners are not clear what actions they need to take to improve.
18. The college provides an outstanding range of programmes which fully meets the range of interests of the learners it attracts and the community that it serves. Provision has been designed carefully to ensure that learners can progress to more advanced courses and into HE. Engagement with employers is an outstanding feature of the college and is reflected in its Beacon status. The college is the provider of choice for many local and regional employers, embracing some highly innovative work; for example, with local software houses which design and develop computer games. The strong links with employers benefit learners throughout the college through the broad range of work placement opportunities they provide. Train to Gain initiatives have expanded significantly in recent years. The college has also been extremely active in broadening its provision for learners aged 14 to 16. It provides courses for large numbers of younger learners at a variety of levels and makes an excellent contribution to the development of the local 14 to 19 strategy. The college offers a broad range of enrichment for its learners, with a strong focus on activities which contribute to their health and well-being.
19. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Learners from diverse social and educational backgrounds are integrated very successfully into the college and make very good progress. A strong commitment to equality and diversity is displayed throughout the college's provision and diversity is celebrated enthusiastically. The involvement of learner representatives in developing the college is exceptional. The college's recent appointment of a sabbatical officer is raising the profile of the learner voice in the college and ensuring that learners have a genuine influence on college planning.
20. Care, advice, guidance and support are outstanding. Pre-enrolment information, advice and guidance are comprehensive, and the excellent induction procedures and student guides, make clear what the college's expectations of its learners

are. The very wide range of support services available, both in the college and through the well coordinated links to specialist support agencies, have made a significant contribution to helping learners achieve their potential.

21. The very well structured tutorial and 'learner at risk' systems effectively identify learners with pastoral support needs. Learners include their personal development goals in learning plans and their progress towards achieving them is monitored carefully. The college has matrix accreditation and through the matrix network provides impartial advice and guidance on its own courses and those of other providers. Students also receive reliable career and progression advice through their frequent tutorial and review meetings. Work-based learners similarly receive excellent support and guidance whilst on their programmes.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

*Equality of opportunity*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

22. Leadership and management are outstanding. This agrees with the college's own assessment. The governors, principal and senior managers provide outstanding leadership and a clear strategic direction for the college which is rooted firmly in its core values. The recent merger was managed exceptionally well. Community and employer partnerships are outstanding and, together with the well targeted provision available through the CoVEs, ensure that employer engagement is strong and that measures to widen participation are successful. Curriculum management is good overall, including for work-based learning, but has yet to be fully effective in a minority of sector subject areas.
23. The quality improvement strategy is comprehensive and largely effective. It is supported by an established and accepted culture of improvement within the college. Key indicators of learner success, including attendance, retention, pass rates, and progression to higher study and jobs, have improved since the last inspection. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and accurate. Reliable data from the excellent management information system are used effectively to monitor performance and inform actions for improvement.
24. The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity are outstanding, including excellent and successful policies and practices to increase the diversity of the student body. The college's response to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA) are exemplary, including extensive consultation and impact analyses. Facilities for learners with difficulties and/or disabilities are excellent. Action on meeting standards under child protection legislation is very good, as is attention to the health and safety of learners.
25. Accommodation and facilities are good overall and outstanding in parts, including engineering, art and design, sport and the health spa. However, the college is aware that parts of the Rugby and Pershore campuses do not match this high standard. Plans to improve accommodation here are well advanced. The design for the new campus at Rugby embraces a series of measures to

improve sustainability. Specialist resources are very good. Access to computers is good and valued by learners.

26. Governance is outstanding. Governors have a very good range of experience and expertise which they use effectively in support of the college's strategy. They monitor college performance closely through a robust standards committee and regular strategy reviews. Governors are aware of relative under-performance in a few areas, including some key skills and some level 3 courses, and they provide suitable challenge to managers to ensure that the necessary improvements are made. Financial management is outstanding, including excellent monitoring and control procedures. The college has recently conducted an economic impact study which demonstrated that money invested in the college has provided a solid return on the investment made. The college provides good value for money.

## Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	1398	72	65	7	3591	59	62	-3
	05/06	1451	69	69	0	2251	73	65	8
	06/07	1304	77	*	*	1802	80	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	32	81	68	13	1	100	64	36
	05/06	33	79	72	7	4	75	68	7
	06/07	30	97	*	*	1	100	*	*
NVQs	04/05	250	62	68	-6	33	67	66	1
	05/06	274	76	72	4	26	58	74	-16
	06/07	406	68	*	*	40	58	*	*
Other	04/05	1116	74	64	10	3557	59	62	-3
	05/06	1144	67	69	-2	2221	73	65	8
	06/07	868	81	*	*	1761	81	*	*

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	2013	62	61	1	3083	65	60	5
	05/06	2716	73	66	7	4151	68	66	2
	06/07	2496	75	*	*	2524	68	*	*
GCSEs	04/05	226	60	64	-4	105	56	63	-7
	05/06	272	81	68	13	84	76	67	9
	06/07	182	74	*	*	66	68	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	83	73	67	6	84	75	75	0
	05/06	14	57	69	-12	34	47	68	-21
	06/07	62	90	*	*	36	56	*	*
NVQs	04/05	421	60	57	3	397	64	60	4
	05/06	432	63	65	-2	521	72	67	5
	06/07	708	73	*	*	698	74	*	*
Other	04/05	1283	62	61	1	2497	65	59	6
	05/06	1998	74	66	8	3512	67	65	2
	06/07	1544	76	*	*	1724	66	*	*

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	2357	65	68	-3	1852	61	58	3
	05/06	2374	74	70	4	1792	66	63	3
	06/07	2275	73	*	*	1604	68	*	*
A/A2 Levels	04/05	351	85	86	-1	79	75	69	6
	05/06	329	88	87	1	47	83	72	11
	06/07	238	94	*	*	52	88	*	*
AS Levels	04/05	767	62	66	-4	100	40	52	-12
	05/06	747	72	67	5	61	33	55	-22
	06/07	597	66	*	*	45	47	*	*
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	390	71	61	10	22	55	54	1
	05/06	189	74	66	8	18	83	57	26
	06/07	8	50	*	*	1	100	*	*
NVQs	04/05	65	65	63	2	307	63	56	7
	05/06	108	81	71	10	306	71	63	8
	06/07	107	74	*	*	340	66	*	*
Other	04/05	784	55	60	-5	1344	62	59	3
	05/06	1001	71	65	6	1360	66	64	2
	06/07	1325	72	*	*	1166	69	*	*

\* The 2006/07 national rates were not released at the time of this inspection

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning programmes managed by the college 2005 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners *	College NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate **	College framework rate **	National framework rate **
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	95	74	48	49	34
		timely	74	41	31	26	21
	05/06	overall	87	57	54	49	44
		timely	103	29	34	22	27
	06/07	overall	121	59	64	52	56
		timely	120	36	41	33	35
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	181	65	50	42	38
		timely	235	32	29	21	22
	05/06	overall	247	72	58	62	53
		timely	223	38	38	30	33
	06/07	overall	292	85	65	80	60
		timely	264	61	45	59	42

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

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