

# Wilberforce 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. Wilberforce College, located on the eastern periphery of Hull, is one of two sixth form colleges in a city which also has a large general further education (GFE) college. Wilberforce primarily provides provision for learners aged 16-18. Increasing numbers of students are from areas of social and economic deprivation: approximately two thirds are in receipt of education maintenance allowances. Despite rising standards in local secondary schools, the prior attainment of students at the college is much lower than that found in most other sixth form colleges. In 2006/07, in the college's 6 main feeder schools, the percentage of students achieving five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics was 29%, which is lower than the local authority average and the national average of 46.8%. Attendance in local secondary schools, especially for Year 11 pupils is well below average. In 2006/07, nearly 80% of students came from families with no experience of education beyond the age of sixteen. The percentage of families with any experience of higher education is extremely low compared to national averages.
2. The area served by the college is one of significant economic disadvantage. Hull has the highest unemployment rate and the lowest level of earnings in Yorkshire and Humberside. National comparisons show that the levels of teenage pregnancy and rates of mental health problems are amongst the highest in England. Crime levels are similarly high. The proportion of learners not in education, employment or training fell in 2007/08 but it remains higher than the local average and significantly higher than the national average.
3. The college offers courses in most sector subject areas. Most provision is full-time. Around 80% of college students study at advanced level on GCE A level and BTEC National programmes. Over one third of all college students study English and/or mathematics at level 2 or below. Since the last inspection the number of full-time students has risen from around 1000 to 1500 in 2007. Almost all learners are of White British origin. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is 4% which is almost double that found in the local population.
4. The college's mission is 'to be a college of outstanding quality, encouraging and enabling the fulfilment of individual potential and working with the community to increase aspirations, participation and achievement'.

## Summary of grades awarded

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

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. Effectiveness of provision is good and some aspects are outstanding. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high and have increased substantially since the last inspection. Pass rates on GCE A level and advanced vocational courses have risen steadily and are good. The proportion of high grade passes on GCSE courses have risen but they remain low in GCSE English. Standards of work are good.
6. Teaching and learning are good. There has been a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. The proportion of good and better teaching has improved. Most lessons are well-planned and teachers use a good range of methods to inspire learning. Satisfactory lessons do not take sufficient account of the range of learners' abilities. The monitoring of students' progress is rigorous. Assessment is satisfactory. Initial assessment and the provision of additional learning support are exemplary. The quality of key skills provision is uneven across curriculum areas.
7. Social and educational inclusion and the response to the needs and interests of learners and the local communities are outstanding. The college has extended its range of vocational provision from entry to level 3 to meet the needs and interests of the local population. Vocational courses now make up around two-thirds of college provision. Many students have disadvantaged backgrounds. The college recruits a higher proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds than in the area and their success rates are at least as good as for all learners. Enrichment opportunities, especially sport, are excellent and participation rates are high. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding.
8. Guidance and support for students are outstanding. Pre-entry and transition arrangements, especially for the most vulnerable, are exemplary and help all learners to settle quickly into college life and remain on their courses. Learners value highly the support they receive from staff.
9. Leadership and management are good. The principal and his senior leadership team have been particularly effective in directing strategies to raise standards and success rates. Governance is good. Self-assessment is largely accurate. Arrangements to assure the quality of lessons are robust. However, the monitoring of individual actions plans following a lesson observation is not systematic or frequent enough. Financial management is strong. Resources for learning are good.

## Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve. College strategies to bring about improvements have been particularly effective. Success rates for learners aged 16-18 have improved at all levels over the last three years and are now good. For the very few adult learners, overall success rates declined in 2007/08. The college is aware of the reasons for this. Pass rates for GCE A levels have been maintained at consistently high levels and were very good at 98% in 2007/08. Value added declined in 2006/07 but has improved in 2007/08; it is now satisfactory overall. Key skills success rates are low.
11. Good improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and learning although some satisfactory teaching remains. Academic and personal support for learners which was good in the last inspection has been strengthened and is now outstanding. Good improvements have also been made to college accommodation, including better social space for students.
12. Quality assurance processes have been strengthened and are good. The self-assessment report is largely accurate; inspectors agreed with most of the key strengths and areas for improvement but a few additional areas for improvement were identified. Grades awarded by inspectors closely match the grades awarded in the self-assessment report.

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

13. The college has made good progress in addressing most of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The proportion of good or better teaching has increased. Facilities for use by students between lessons have greatly improved and are now good. The number and quality of student social areas, study and learning resource areas and computer suites have improved. A range of food outlets provide much better choice of healthy eating options for students.
14. Sharing of good practice within the college and externally has improved greatly. Teaching and learning teams and subject learning coaches help spread good practice. The college virtual learning environment (VLE) is used well and hosts extensive examples of good practice from both within the college and external sources. Some aspects of self-assessment remain as areas for improvement; for example, curriculum area self-assessment reports have an appropriate emphasis on achievement and standards but other aspects of students experience are not covered sufficiently. The college is addressing this in its current self assessment report.

## Key strengths

- high success rates for students aged 16-18
- outstanding range of provision to promote inclusion and widen participation
- excellent range of enrichments activities
- outstanding support for students
- high levels of progression to higher education
- very effective strategies to bring about improvement
- strong financial management.

## Areas for improvement

### *The college should address:*

- the proportion of high grade passes in GCSE English
- some aspects of quality assurance
- the insufficient monitoring of individual action plans following lesson observations.



## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

15. Achievement and the standards of learners work are good, a judgement which accords with the college's own self-assessment. The college's success rates have improved markedly since the last inspection. The pace of this improvement is faster than that seen nationally by all colleges. For learners aged 16-18, nearly all the learners, the improvement in success rates is equally notable; from 75% in 2005/06 to 85% in 2007/08.
16. The nature of the college's provision, which comprises a significant vocational element at levels 1, 2 and 3, depresses the college's success rates in comparison with the sector average for sixth form colleges, where there is a much higher proportion of academic work. In comparison with the national success rates for a mix of provision, which reflects more accurately the college's intake of students and courses, the overall long course success rate is consistently high.
17. Success rates on long courses for learners aged 16 -18 have risen since the last inspection and are above those found in colleges with similar provision. College data for 2007/08 indicate that success rates have continued to rise at level 1 and 2. The level 1 success rate is particularly high. At level 3, the success rate dipped in 2006/07; the self assessment report identified this weakness. The college took swift action and success rates on advanced courses have risen in 2007/08 and are high compared with colleges with a similar mix of provision.
18. The number of adult learners in the college is very small. The success rates for this cohort of learners fell in 2007/08; the college is aware of the reasons for this. Overall, the trend in success rates for adults generally mirrors that of learners aged 16-18.
19. The pass rate on GCE A level courses is high in 2006/07; it improved further in 2007/08 to 98.2%. Many students make good progress compared with their prior attainment at GCSE. However, the college is aware that there are inconsistencies; progress is satisfactory overall. Pass rates on advanced level vocational courses are improving and in 2007/08 were higher than for colleges with similar provision.
20. In 2007/08 the proportion of students who achieved a high grade pass at GCSE level increased by six percentage points to 42%. In GCSE mathematics, pass rates improved in 2007/08 to just under the national average. Pass rates in GCSE English also improved in the same year but remain low. Pass rates on both the introductory certificate and the first diploma courses are high. Key skills pass rates are low.
21. The college makes effective use of data to analyse the performance of different cohorts of students; those of minority ethnic origin and those with learning difficulties and disabilities perform as well as their peers.

22. Students' enjoy coming to college as evidenced by their good attendance and their exemplary behaviour both in and out of lessons. They make exceptional personal progress and a high proportion of them progress to HE.

Quality of provision

Good : Grade 2

23. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good which agrees with the college's self-assessment. The college has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Considerable investment in staff development and the sharing of good practice are having a positive impact in increasing the proportion of good and better teaching. Arrangements to assure the quality of lessons are thorough. Formal systems are enhanced by a good range of informal practice; for example through peer observations.
24. In the best lessons, teachers use a wide range of methods and activities to meet the different needs of learners successfully. Learners are enthusiastic about their courses, and enjoy their lessons. Teachers display good levels of subject knowledge and use information technology well to support learning. Learners' enjoy their work and achieve well. In satisfactory lessons, planned activities do not meet all needs and abilities and learners do not make as much progress as they could.
25. Procedures to monitor individual learner progress are rigorous. Students appreciate the one to one interviews with their teachers and say these contribute significantly to their enjoyment of college and their subsequent success. Parents and guardians are kept well informed of the progress of their sons' or daughters'.
26. Arrangements for the initial assessment of students' additional learning needs are exemplary. Very effective support is provided promptly, either in the classroom or in discrete sessions. Students speak very highly of the support they receive. College data indicate that students who receive additional support achieve or exceed their expected grades.
27. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers mark work promptly. However there is inconsistency in the quality of the written feedback; not all learners know what they need to do to improve. The teaching of key skills is integrated into most vocational areas. However, the college is aware that there is inconsistency of practice and actions are in place to remedy this.
28. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The self-assessment report judges this aspect to be good. The college's provision is broad, well planned and reflects the needs of the local area very well. The range of GCE AS and A level subjects is extensive. The college has increased significantly its vocational provision from entry through to level three. Over two thirds of college students take vocational programmes. Links with employers are developing well at curriculum level. However, the college is aware that a more strategic approach to employer engagement is needed to meet the increasingly vocational nature of its provision.

29. An excellent range of enrichment activities promotes the themes contained within Every Child Matters very well. This was identified as a strength in the self assessment report and one which has been maintained since the previous inspection.
30. The college prides itself, rightly so, on its excellent sporting successes; it was voted North East Sports College of the year for 2007/08. All students' whatever their sporting ability, are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through participation in sport. Staff at the college are proactive in increasing participation amongst some hard to reach groups; for example, students with disabilities, and females who have previously opted out of sport or exercise. In other aspects of the enrichment programme students make an outstanding contribution to the work of the college and to the local, national and international communities through a range of fund raising and charitable events.
31. Links with partner schools are strong, a strength identified at the previous inspection. College students act as mentors to pupils in the college's partner schools, helping to improve their results in tests at the end of Key Stage 9 and in GCSE examinations. They also provide support to gifted and talented pupils. Sports students host netball clubs twice per week and provide coaching activities in schools as part of their BTEC First programme.
32. Guidance and support for students are outstanding; the college was more modest in judging this area to be good. Prospective students receive high quality advice and guidance. Links with local partner schools are well established and effective. Transition arrangements for learners moving to the college from local schools are exemplary. Prospective students benefit from very good opportunities to sample courses. For the most vulnerable students and those identified with special needs, a summer school is organised to help them make a successful transition from school to college.
33. The tutorial provision has been further developed for 2008/09 following a review of its effectiveness and feedback from students. The revised curriculum includes much to promote healthy lifestyles: healthy eating and nutrition, drugs awareness and sexual health. It is too early for the full impact of these changes to be evaluated. Students have good access to counselling services and these are well used.
34. The college has made considerable investment in developing a very effective electronic system to monitor attendance, and to help identify any students who are at risk of underperforming. Staff have easy access to the system which hosts a range of data about students' performance. Students say they like the system because they can access their own data at any time and that this promotes good communication with staff about their progress and development.
35. Careers and progression advice are structured carefully. Internal progression within the college is good. Links with Connexions are strong and students have good access to career advice. Students say they particularly appreciate the support they receive from the college in researching and applying for higher

education. Good links exist with the local university to which many students' progress. Progression into higher education institutions across the country is very good. Appropriate support and guidance is provided for students looking to progress into employment.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

36. Leadership and management are good. The college is well led and governance is good, judgements which accord with the college's self-assessment. The clerk is experienced and governors have a good range of expertise. Governors are highly supportive and appropriately challenging of the college's performance. The principal provides very good leadership and, along with senior managers, sets a very clear strategic direction which is clearly focussed on the needs of learners in the local area. The college works very well with a range of strategic partners to widen participation and to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training. The college acknowledges the need to establish a more coherent strategy to engage with employers. Good progress has been made in eliminating most weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Communications are good.
37. The college has made several improvements to the site and the accommodation. The standard of buildings remains variable but most teaching areas provide a good environment for teaching and learning. Plans are well advanced for a substantial new build on the existing site. Resources are good. Information technology suites provide good access to computers both on a 'drop-in' and pre-booked basis. Students really appreciate the easy availability of learning resources on the colleges increasingly well used VLE.
38. The promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding. The local area is characterised by very low levels of educational achievement and significant economic disadvantage. Most students come from homes with no experience of post-16 education. A very high proportion of students are in receipt of the education maintenance allowance. In their time at college, learners make exceptional personal progress, achieve well and a high proportion of them progress to university. The college is very responsive to local needs and has expanded vocational courses and provision at level 1 and 2 accordingly. The promotion of equality and diversity is integrated effectively into the curriculum through a wide range of approaches. The college makes good use of data to analyse its performance for different types of learners. Success rates for learners from ethnic minorities, those with a disability and children in care are equal to those of all learners. Pass rates for males, an issue identified by the college, have improved significantly in 2007/08.
39. A wide range of appropriate policies meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. All staff and governors have received training in safeguarding.

Students say they feel safe in college and that incidents of bullying are rare. Inspectors judged the outcomes of safeguarding within the themes of Every Child Matters to be outstanding.

40. Quality assurance arrangements have been strengthened since the last inspection. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and inclusive. Curriculum self-assessments have a strong focus on achievement. However, other aspects of the learners experience are not covered adequately. Despite this, the self-assessment report is largely accurate; inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements but found it to be overly modest in two areas. The internal lesson observation process is rigorous. Lesson observation reports are analysed accurately to identify strengths and areas for improvement and used well to inform whole college staff development. However, the quality of individual action plans following observations is inconsistent; plans lack detail and monitoring of progress against targets is not systematic enough.
41. Financial management is strong; a strength maintained since the last inspection. Very effective management systems are in place to monitor average class sizes, staff utilisation and room occupancy. Teaching staff are well qualified. 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 2008, compared with the national rates for sixth form colleges.

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	721	54	64	-10	214	70	57	13
	05/06	992	56	71	-15	25	68	57	11
	06/07	317	68	73	-5	...	...	64	...
	07/08*	178	89	**	**	3	67	**	**
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	15	73	71	2	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	78	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	706	53	63	-10	217	70	57	13
	05/06	992	56	71	-15	25	68	57	11
	06/07	317	68	72	-4	...	...	64	...
	07/08*	178	89	**	**	3	67	**	**

\* College data

\*\* not available

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2008, compared with the national rates for sixth form colleges.

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	773	76	74	2	148	64	57	7
	05/06	904	78	78	0	35	54	65	-11
	06/07	962	78	82	-4	17	65	65	0
	07/08*	845	86	**	**	10	60	**	**
GCSEs	04/05	474	81	78	3	74	70	65	5
	05/06	623	79	82	-4	12	77	67	10
	06/07	674	85	83	2	14	71	68	3
	07/08*	595	87	**	**	8	63	**	**
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	...	...	75	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	77	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	19	53	78	-25	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	5	100	...	...	...	60	...	...
	05/06	4	75	...	...	1	0	69	-69
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	70	...
	07/08*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	294	67	62	5	74	57	53	4
	05/06	277	74	70	4	22	45	62	-17
	06/07	269	73	79	-3	3	33	62	-29
	07/08*	250	82	**	**	2	50	**	**

\* College data

\*\* not available

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2008, compared with the national rates for sixth form colleges.

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	3537	76	82	-6	126	72	60	12
	05/06	3492	80	84	-4	80	73	65	8
	06/07	3677	78	85	-7	74	84	69	15
	07/08*	3423	81	**	**	62	50	**	**
A/A2 Levels	04/05	1113	90	92	-2	49	90	76	14
	05/06	1089	87	93	-6	30	83	78	5
	06/07	1229	89	93	-4	33	86	80	6
	07/08*	1133	91	**	**	23	65	**	**
AS Levels	04/05	2223	69	78	-9	58	57	54	3
	05/06	2163	72	79	-7	34	63	58	5
	06/07	2130	76	81	-5	15	78	61	18
	07/08*	1894	76	**	**	31	35	**	**
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	194	78	74	4	8	75	...	...
	05/06	66	83	77	6	7	86	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	04/05	4	75	...	...	...	...	54	...
	05/06	5	100	...	...	1	100	64	36
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	72	...
	07/08*	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	3	0	72	-72	11	73	55	18
	05/06	168	65	79	-14	4	75	62	-12
	06/07	396	68	80	-12	16	69	66	3
	07/08*	396	76	**	**	8	63	**	**

\* College data

\*\* not available

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