

Worcester Sixth Form 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.

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); 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. Worcester Sixth Form College is located in the south-east of the city. The college serves a mixed catchment area that includes areas of affluence, but also areas of significant deprivation in the centre of the city. The college attracts over half of its 16 to 18 year-old students from six 11–16 partner schools, five in Worcester city and one in the rural area of Martley to the west. In 2008, 46% of 16 year-olds in Worcester achieved five or more GCSEs at A* to C, including mathematics and English, which was slightly below the national figure of 48%. Some 9% of 16 to 18 year-old students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, well above the Worcester population of 3%.

2. The college provides courses, mainly at level 3, in most sector subject areas. Student numbers are highest in science and mathematics, humanities, languages, literature and culture and in social sciences. The college enrolled 1,569 students on daytime courses in 2008/09, most of whom were aged 16 to 18. The majority of students are full-time and follow GCE AS and A-level courses. There are more female students than males, significantly so in the 19+ age group. The mission of the college highlights its aim to serve the needs of Worcestershire and adjacent areas through providing high quality education at the college.

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>Good: contributory grade 2</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

3. The effectiveness of provision is good. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are satisfactory but students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Success rates on courses for adult students are unsatisfactory.
4. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and students enjoy their lessons. There are outstanding arrangements for meeting additional learning needs which ensure that students who find learning difficult make very good progress.
5. The college makes an outstanding response to the needs and interests of learners and employers and offers a wide range of courses, including an excellent range of enrichment activities. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding.
6. Guidance and support are good. Specialist guidance and support are very effective and careers advice and guidance are excellent. Students' progress is monitored rigorously. The college has been successful in its efforts to improve retention, although it acknowledges that further improvement is still required.
7. Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior managers provide strong leadership and receive excellent support from governors. Curriculum management is good. Quality assurance arrangements are mostly reliable, although the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are insufficiently detailed. Despite the college's best efforts, some unsatisfactory accommodation persists and students have inadequate social space. Specialist resources are good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. The college has good capacity to improve. It has demonstrated a good record in bringing about improvement within the limitations of its accommodation. The management team are highly committed and well placed to bring about further improvement. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and support developments in most aspects of provision. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning requires further improvement. Self-assessment is largely accurate, although inspectors found that some grades awarded were over-generous. Financial management is good.

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

9. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Retention rates on level 3 courses have

improved. External social space for students is much improved, although there continues to be insufficient social space in the main college building. Accommodation has been improved in the areas highlighted in the previous report, although unsatisfactory accommodation persists in some areas of the college. Facilities for drop-in ICT are much improved. Self-assessment procedures in curriculum areas are now better informed by data and are more accurate.

Key strengths

- strong and coherent strategic leadership
- good progress made by the majority of students
- good teaching
- outstanding arrangements for meeting students' additional learning needs
- wide range of courses well matched to students' needs
- outstanding promotion of educational and social inclusion
- good specialist guidance and support
- outstanding governance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the rate of improvement of success rates on courses at level 3
- insufficiently detailed monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
- some unsatisfactory accommodation and inadequate social space.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

10. Achievement and standards are good. This is lower than the college's self-assessment. Students produce work of a high standard and speak with pride about what they have achieved. Although success rates for students aged 16 to 18 are close to national rates they represent good progress, given the starting points of the students. Pass rates are mostly good, with an excellent number of students achieving the highest grades at GCE AS and A-level. Retention has improved and is satisfactory. Success rates for adults, who comprise nearly 10% of the college's enrolments, are low. Success rates for students from minority ethnic groups match those of other students in the college. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress. Achievement of key skills qualifications is satisfactory and improving.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

11. Teaching and learning are good. The college judged them to be outstanding in its self-assessment. There are productive working relationships between teachers and students. In the majority of lessons teachers plan their work effectively, employ a good variety of activities and encourage learning through skilful questioning. Students say how much they enjoy this approach. The use of information learning technology (ILT) to support teaching is developing along with the improvement in resources. However, some departments have been slow to exploit the college's virtual learning environment to enhance learning. Rules regarding health and safety are enforced well to ensure that students can work safely in practical lessons. Assessment procedures are thorough. Marked work is returned promptly and with helpful comments on how it could be improved.
12. The college's arrangements for meeting students' additional learning needs are outstanding. Many students' additional learning needs are identified early through the college's good links with schools. Initial assessment is accurate and appropriate support is provided quickly and effectively. Students who receive additional learning support make very good progress. Although attendance is mostly good, the college is not content with this and has introduced an imaginative 'traffic light' system, designed to improve it still further. Attendance at key skills lessons is low.
13. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is outstanding. It provides a very broad range of courses for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3, including a suitable range of vocational options. There are also courses for students aged 14 to 16, adult day-time and evening classes and some community-based provision. The college offers an outstanding range of enrichment activities. Students participate in many trips, visits and exchanges organised by departments and benefit from the excellent range of activities provided by the sports academies. Productive links with employers enable more

than one thousand students to benefit from work experience each year, thus contributing to their future economic well-being.

14. Educational and social inclusion are outstanding. Nearly half of the college's students have prior attainment which is below average for the courses they choose to follow. The college has changed the AS-level programme to better support these students and their progress is good.
15. Guidance and support are good. The college provides very good specialist support for an increasing number of students with a range of specific learning difficulties and has established a particularly good reputation for identifying and supporting students with dyslexia. Counselling and other welfare services are promoted widely and well used. However, the college does not evaluate the impact of some of these services sufficiently.
16. The tutorial programme meets the needs of students well and covers issues which enable students to develop healthy lifestyles. Tutors are fully aware of the need to improve retention still further and monitor students' progress rigorously. Communication between tutors, support services and teachers is good. Students receive excellent advice and guidance on their higher education or career plans. Increasing numbers of students are gaining places at universities where competition for entry is strong.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Good: grade 2

17. Leadership and management are good, which is lower than the college's judgement. The principal and senior managers provide strong and coherent strategic leadership. The college has introduced a range of well considered initiatives designed to improve retention and these have been largely successful for students aged 16 to 18. However, improvements in success rates since the last inspection have been modest.
18. Curriculum management is good. Heads of department have a broad range of duties and discharge their responsibilities well. Arrangements for quality assurance are thorough and mostly effective. Accurate management information supports the monitoring of progress in meeting college and course targets. The quality assurance of teaching and learning is comprehensive but lesson observations do not provide enough reliable evidence to enable the college to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in sufficient detail. Self-assessment is detailed and supported well by data. The college has identified accurately most of its strengths and areas for improvement but has overestimated the significance of its strengths and the impact of its areas for improvement when determining the grades for the final report.

19. The college's procedures for ensuring equality of opportunity are good. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is higher than in the local community and they perform well compared to those in similar colleges. The college makes an appropriate response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA). All staff are checked in line with safeguarding requirements but administrative arrangements need further improvement.

20. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. There are highly effective arrangements to support their continuing professional development and training. Specialist resources are good but, although the college has made appropriate efforts to improve accommodation within the constraints of its budget, some poor and cramped classrooms persist and students' access to social space remains unsatisfactory. Governance is outstanding. Governors are highly experienced and provide a very high level of support and challenge. They act decisively to ensure learners' best interests receive the highest priority. Financial management and the deployment of resources are good. The college provides good value for money.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 long 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
All Long - Level 1	05/06	128	57	71	-14	256	45	57	-12
	06/07	87	44	73	-29	400	54	64	-10
	07/08**	32	72			283	47		
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	2	0	78	-78	*	*		
	06/07	*	*			*	*		
	07/08**	*	*			*	*		
NVQs	05/06	*	*			*	*		
	06/07	*	*			*	*		
	07/08**	*	*			*	*		
Other	05/06	126	58	71	-13	256	45	57	-12
	06/07	87	44	72	-28	400	54	64	-10
	07/08**	32	72			283	47		

* courses not running

** college data

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 long 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
All Long - Level 2	05/06	442	80	78	2	134	53	65	-12
	06/07	445	84	82	2	174	59	65	-6
	07/08**	390	85			108	59		
GCSEs	05/06	281	85	82	3	77	58	67	-9
	06/07	274	89	83	6	55	71	68	3
	07/08**	253	89			34	53		
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	38	76	77	-1	1	0	60	-60
	06/07	34	88	78	10	1	100	60	40
	07/08**	*	*			*	*		
NVQs	05/06	*	*			*	*		
	06/07	*	*			*	*		
	07/08**	*	*			*	*		
Other	05/06	123	70	70	0	56	46	62	-16
	06/07	137	74	79	-5	118	53	62	-9
	07/08**	137	78			74	62		

* courses not running

** college data

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long 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
All Long - Level 3	05/06	4779	82	84	-2	185	57	65	-8
	06/07	4681	84	85	-1	139	65	69	-4
	07/08**	4534	84			165	64		
A/A2 Levels	05/06	1496	95	93	2	50	86	78	8
	06/07	1525	95	93	2	44	68	80	-12
	07/08**	1446	94			34	62		
AS Levels	05/06	2900	80	79	1	96	46	58	-12
	06/07	2804	79	81	-2	58	60	61	-1
	07/08**	2673	80			73	62		
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	126	48	77	-29	2	0	73	-73
	06/07	1	100	65	35	*	*		
	07/08**	*	*			*	*		
NVQs	05/06	*	*			*	*		
	06/07	*	*			*	*		
	07/08**	*	*			*	*		
Other	05/06	257	48	79	-31	37	51	62	-11
	06/07	351	77	80	-3	37	68	66	2
	07/08**	415	80			58	67		

* courses not running

** college data