

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



19 February 2016

Michael Kitcatt  
Principal  
Worcester Sixth Form College  
Spetchley Road  
Worcester  
WR5 2LU

Dear Mr Kitcatt

### **Short inspection of Worcester Sixth Form College**

Following the short inspection on 3 and 4 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in October 2012.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

- Your leadership team has maintained the good quality of education and training in the college since the previous inspection. You and your team understand what makes good teaching and learning. You have continued to have a strong focus on sustaining the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; as a result, most learners are making good or excellent progress. Lesson observations, in most cases, accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement. A rigorous and accurate self-assessment process and robust action plans ensure that underperforming courses are improved rapidly.
- You, senior leaders and governors have set a clear strategic direction. You work successfully with the local authority, local employers and a not in education, employment or training (NEET) prevention group to ensure that provision is responsive to local and regional priorities. This partnership work results in a high proportion of your learners progressing to further study, higher education, apprenticeships and employment.
- Governors support and challenge you, senior leaders and managers to work together well in their drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Student governors provide leaders with a valuable insight into the 'life of a student', which is well received and used to inform decision making. Governors interrogate the information they receive on learners' outcomes. They provide managers with critical feedback on how to improve the information presented and its impact on their understanding

and on learners. As a result, governors are very well informed about the improvements needed to the provision.

- The implementation of study programmes is effective. Clear routes are in place enabling learners to progress between courses and levels, with a range of academic or vocational programmes. Good advice and guidance prepare learners well for their next steps. The design of programmes includes an appropriate focus on improving learners' English and mathematical skills, with more learners now studying these subjects than previously.
- Learners on study programmes develop their vocational skills well through relevant work experience, work-related projects and competitions. Links with local and national employers provide learners with wide-ranging opportunities to make informed judgements about their next steps, including information regarding apprenticeship opportunities, job search, mock interviews and job counselling. The college Young Enterprise Company provides learners with the opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial skills; learners recently won two regional awards for effective team working.
- Senior leaders and managers have accurately identified that further improvement is required in the retention rates of learners on the children's play, learning and development (CPLD) two-year course, on BTEC level 2 and foundation mathematics, and in the monitoring of progress and the quality of support for a small number of learners. You have appropriate strategies in place to improve these concerns.
- At the previous inspection, inspectors commended you and your team for being committed to a high standard of education and providing learners with good teaching, learning and assessment throughout the college. Inspectors also identified a number of areas for improvement, including: the amount of outstanding teaching; the planning of teaching to meet the needs of all learners; low retention rates on two-year courses; inconsistencies in success rates, particularly for male learners; and the standard of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and its impact on the ability of learners to work independently.
- The leadership team has taken decisive action to improve these areas, and has moved the college forward. The impact is clear:
  - The planning and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have improved, including in English and mathematics.
  - Outcomes for learners have improved in line with the national rate and remain good. The variability in success rates on the large majority of underperforming courses has improved, particularly on BTEC level 3 courses and for adult learners. Success rates have improved on two-year courses, but are still too low due to the retention of learners on courses. In-year attendance rates and the number of learners completing their programmes are high. The differences in achievement between male and female learners have

reduced considerably, as male learners' achievements have improved; and success rates for Pakistani learners have significantly increased and are now well above the college rate.

- The very good progress made by AS-level learners has been maintained; the progress made by A-level and BTEC level 3 learners has improved, and they now make better than expected progress.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved, as a result of: the re-introduction of peer observation by teachers; the appointment of effective teaching and learning mentors to support staff; the use of dedicated time set aside for staff meetings and for visits to other providers to share best practice; and staff training in the use of the VLE, leading to a dramatic increase in its use by staff and learners, with many learners taking advantage of the opportunity to work independently outside of the classroom.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, legal responsibilities are met and effective action is taken to safeguard learners. Staff are aware of their new responsibilities and have taken appropriate steps to protect learners from radicalisation and extremism. Fundamental British values are promoted well through tutorials and, where appropriate, in lessons. All staff promote a positive, friendly and tolerant culture. Learners' behaviour in lessons and in college communal areas is exemplary; they respect each other and college staff. Managers work effectively with a range of agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable learners are identified and kept safe while learning. Managers are working particularly well with external agencies to identify and support young carers; they recently received a recognition award for this work.

### **Inspection findings**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good, enabling the very large majority of learners to achieve their qualifications and progress to employment and further study. Most teachers use creative teaching strategies to ensure that learners participate well in lessons, make good progress and develop their knowledge and skills effectively, including in the correct use of technical language.
- Learning and progress are checked regularly in the majority of lessons. However, in a minority of lessons teachers do not measure the progress or learning that each learner has made. Teachers' marking of assignment work includes good checking of spelling and grammar, and often has clear information on how a learner can improve their performance.
- Most learners receive good feedback from teachers regarding their progress; the best teachers pose additional questions which extend learners' knowledge. Most subject teachers agree and set targets that are

clear and helpful, and as a result, learners know their strengths and areas for improvement. However, teachers do not set sufficiently detailed learning targets for those learners who are not on target to achieve their qualifications. As a result, these learners do not understand how to make better progress. A minority of all subject teachers do not identify targets that provide learners with the opportunity to develop further their literacy and numeracy skills.

- The large majority of learners achieve grades at or above those expected from their qualifications when they start college. Vocational advanced-level learners make excellent progress. Learners' rates of progression to further study, higher education, apprenticeships or employment are high.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good. In mathematics, learners make rapid progress, using calculations well to apply and solve mathematical problems. In English, the standard of learners' writing is improving, and they are able to write confidently for different purposes and styles. In 2014/15 the proportion of learners achieving grades A\* to C in their English GCSE increased and was well above the low national rate. The college has implemented a robust strategy to improve literacy across all subjects. Inspectors observed many lessons where subject teachers skilfully exploited naturally occurring opportunities to develop further learners' literacy skills, in, for example, BTEC level 3 sports and public services and in A-level physics.
- A comprehensive enrichment programme has been implemented effectively as part of the study programme requirements. Learners attend weekly group and one-to-one tutorials with specialist tutors. They take part in a good range of sports, educational visits, work experience and other enrichment activities. The number of learners attending non-compulsory work experience has increased. Many learners engage in the college's professional programme to help prepare them for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), medicine, healthcare, law and business. As a result, learners benefit by being better prepared for further study or employment.
- Managers have responded positively to requests from learners to provide them with opportunities to meet and to support each other. As a result, regular meetings take place for young carers, transgender learners and for learners who suffer from examination anxiety, using art therapy.
- Leaders and managers have developed an effective strategy to increase the numbers of learners on science and technology programmes to meet the priorities of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) priorities. The college has worked effectively with local employers to develop courses and learners' skills to meet their specific needs, for example, a new science centre and the addition of applied science A level to the curriculum. As a result, a small number of learners have gained local employment in cyber security.
- Learners with high needs receive effective support both in and outside of lessons. They are making good progress and understand their strengths

and areas for improvement on each subject. They feel safe and are well supported at college. They are clear about their next step and longer-term goals.

- Learners aged 14 to 16 are on target to achieve their qualifications. They feel safe and know whom to go to for help or advice. Staff carefully monitor the learners' progress and well-being and provide good levels of support.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers share best practice in the planning for assessment activities in lessons, so that they are able to measure the progress and learning that each learner has made
- teachers improve the quality and detail of target-setting for the minority of learners who are not on target to complete their qualifications, so that they understand how to make better progress; and also provide targets to help learners to improve further their literacy and numeracy skills within their subjects
- managers, teachers and tutors monitor closely the retention and progress made by a small number of learners, particularly on BTEC level 2 courses, to ensure that they achieve their qualifications.

Yours sincerely

Denise Olander  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection we were assisted by the deputy principal as nominee. We met you, your senior leaders, managers and governors, including the chair of the governing body and two student governors. We visited each of your departments with members of the leadership team to observe teaching, learning and assessment and to look at learners' work. We spoke to learners across subjects, including learners aged 14 to 16 and learners with high needs. We held meetings with learners, staff and managers. We reviewed key documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners, parents and carers by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires and by seeking the views of learners during onsite activity.