

# Accountability Statement and Local Needs Duty 2025/26

# Statement of Purpose

This Accountability Statement outlines the College's commitment to providing the highest quality education and opportunities to develop skills and personal characteristics which respond to the priorities set by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as detailed in the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). It reviews how the College's existing curriculum and provision meets local needs and aims to identify actions needed to further align with local priorities. The College works collaboratively with key stakeholders and employers throughout the county to create as many opportunities for our students as possible to experience the workplace, which in turn, helps the College to identify what employers need and, through their feedback, what further skills students need to develop to be well-prepared for their future employment.

This Accountability Statement also reflects the longer-term actions arising from the Local Needs Duty including the need to:

- provide high quality teaching and learning so that students leave well-qualified for future education or training;
- · engage employers in discussions around the College's curriculum so that it supports what employers need;
- work in partnership to provide good careers and employment information, advice and guidance so students are well-informed about progression routes;
- review high demand or emerging sectors and adapt curriculum and skills development opportunities as appropriate.

### Context and Place

Worcester Sixth Form College was founded in 1984 and in 1992 was incorporated as an independent body. On 1st April 2019 the College achieved 16-19 academy status and joined the Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust.

The College has 1768 students who are almost exclusively full-time. The College offers thirty-four A Level subjects along with Applied/AAQ programmes in Business, Criminology, Engineering, Health and Social Care, Human Biology, IT, Sport & Exercise Science, and Travel, T Levels in Education and Health and we will introduce a Business Marketing T Level in September 2026. Of our current cohort, approximately 47% are enrolled on an A Level programme, 34% on a Mixed programme, 16% on an Applied programme and 3% on Level 2 courses.

The College's mission statement is to provide a safe and supportive learning environment in which our students achieve outstanding academic outcomes and personal development to equip them to progress to university, employment or an apprenticeship of their choice.

The College is located in the city of Worcester and around 50% of our intake each year is drawn from partner schools with other students deciding to attend College rather than stay at a school sixth form in the county or adjacent areas. We liaise with local bus providers to ensure provision is aligned with student applications and also subsidise connecting bus travel for students who travel by train.

Worcestershire has a population of 614,185 residents (2023) and is expected to increase by 4% by 2030. 59% of the population are of working age (2021) compared to 63% nationally. The LEP Worcestershire Economy Report (2025) states that 86% of the county is classified as rural, as such transport from some areas of the county can prove challenging. ONS census data (2021) indicates that of Worcester's residents 50% work locally, travelling less than 6 miles (or 10 kilometres) to work compared to the national average of 35%. Due to the geography and transport links across the county, there is opportunity for individuals to commute to Birmingham, and neighbouring counties for work. Data also suggests that there are more 'workers' in the county than there are jobs, so commuting is born out of necessity for many residents.

The Worcestershire Plan for Growth (2020-2040) identifies five geographical areas within the county, each with differing economic bases and strengths. For example, Worcester City has a strong manufacturing base with particular opportunities in the health and care, business and professional services sectors, whilst Malvern Hills has a cluster of cyber and technology led businesses, the Vale of Evesham has a thriving horticultural sector, the Rural Heartlands has a large number of small and micro businesses and North Worcestershire is known for advanced manufacturing and business services.

#### **Economic and Social Context**

- Worcester average earnings of £33,891 (September 2024 ONS data) compare unfavourably to the UK average of £38,600 and similarly, ONS Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (July 2025) indicates that median pay for employees each month (£2453) is in the lowest quartile nationally. There are, however, lower levels of unemployment (3.1% compared to 4.2% nationally July 2025 ONS data). Worcestershire has, however, improved its representation in the higher skilled occupations 35% compared with 32% nationally.
- Whilst the county's economy has grown on average by 3.5% each year (2013-2022), productivity is 20% below the national average.
- There has been an 11% increase in the number of jobs in the county since 2013 with a further 3% increase anticipated in the next 5 years. It is notable that 78% of the county's businesses employ less than 5 people, 89% of businesses employ between 1 and 9 people.
- According to the Worcestershire County Economic Summary, whilst the percentage of claimants aged 18-24 was 4.9% (July 2025) compared with 7.7% across the West Midlands and 5.6% nationally, this represented an increase on the previous period.
- Whilst deprivation in areas of the county is generally below average, the College recruits from the Worcester, Redditch, Malvern and Wyre Forest areas which are all in the bottom 10% for deprivation and social mobility.
- 43.7% of the county's working age population have achieved a degree level qualification or higher (compared with 43.2% nationally). 6% of the county's population have no qualifications and 9.8% have level 1.
- The LEP Worcestershire economy report 2025 states that over the last five years the largest increase in jobs has been in Accommodation & Food Services, (+4,000) with the largest fall in the Business Administration & Support Services sector (-3,000). The county has nearly double the national average of the workforce working in manufacturing, engineering and production, and these are areas of skills shortage.

# Regional Priorities and Industrial Strategy

The Worcestershire LEP identifies the following sectors as being central to the local economy, representing large volumes of jobs and having strong potential for growth in Worcestershire:

Business administration and professional services: Including legal services, audit, accountancy, insurance, management consultancy, employment
activities, business admin and support services.

- Construction: Including building construction, civil engineering, specialised construction activities and architectural and engineering activities.
- Health and Care: Including social care, plus niche sectors including instrument devices and equipment manufacture; research and development; healthcare services and assistive technology and diagnostics.

The WLEP identifies the following opportunity sectors with significant potential for high-value growth:

- Advanced Manufacturing: Including the manufacture of computer and electronic products, machinery and equipment, metal products, non-metallic products and other manufacturing and transport equipment.
- Cyber Security, IT and Defence: Including telecommunications, computer programming, consultancy and related digital activities, information service
  activities and defence activities.
- Horti/agricultural Technology: Including support to agriculture and post-harvest crop activities; hunting, trapping and related service activities; aquaculture; manufacture of food products and scientific research and development.

## Consequently, the WLEP has identified five skills priorities:

- To enhance the coordination within employment support aimed at reducing claimant levels and improving individual health and well-being whilst
  impacting positively on economic activity within the County.
- To aim for all educational establishments to annually meet all eight Gatsby benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, with a particular focus on the Worcestershire economy.
- To create an education and training provision eco-system that meets local needs and the future trends of Worcestershire's economy i.e., ensuring Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) are responsive.
- To increase the number of graduates and skilled young people who spend a significant part of their economic life in Worcestershire.
- To improve the economic activity rates in our older workforce by creating a culture of flexible work environments and upskilling/reskilling opportunities.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) have identified the following priorities:

- Jobs for everyone: investing in jobs, skills, training and apprenticeships and reducing youth unemployment and ensuring everyone has a job that pays well.
- Homes for everyone: building social and affordable homes and creating vibrant communities so that everyone will have a place to call home.
- Growth for everyone: helping businesses grow, supporting innovation and creativity and making sure everyone benefits and the environment is protected.
- · Journeys for everyone: connecting communities and making travel easier, safer and more affordable for everyone

The Local Skills Improvement plan (LSIP), identifies the following priorities aimed at resolving short-term priorities, developing long-term plans and building partnerships:

- Equipping workers with technical skills & knowledge needed to alleviate employers' skills shortfalls and enable individuals to progress in their career;
- Developing the common skills and workplace behaviours that will promote employability and progression opportunities;
- Promoting a culture where business leaders recognise the strategic importance of proactively developing people & talent to the productivity of their businesses:

- Developing the workforce planning capabilities of managers to enable businesses to identify their skills needs and providers to adapt training accordingly;
- Encouraging a collaborative skills system in which provision can be tailored to the needs of employers.

The Government's Industrial Strategy (Invest 2035), highlights the eight growth driving sectors: advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, creative industries, defence, digital and technologies, financial services, life sciences, and professional and business services. In addition, construction and health and care are seen as priority sectors, reflecting the requirements of the region to support the NHS Workforce Plan and to provide a workforce to build the housing that has been commissioned by local authorities.

# Contribution to National, Regional, Local Priorities

With a range of A level, Applied, Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQ) and T Level qualifications alongside a small number of GCSEs, the College's curriculum is strong and there is an extensive programme of study, which further supports the skills development of our students so that they are successful academically and also have the skills to make them ready for the workplace and assets to local employers. An outline of how the College's curriculum aligns to local, regional and national priorities is shown below:

Skills Area	Local Priority	West Midlands Priority	National Priority	Emergent Priority	Worcester Sixth Form College Offer	Related Subjects or Enrichment
Aerospace		<b>√</b>			✓	Physics A Level Engineering Applied L3 Physics & Engineering Academy
Advanced manufacturing/ Engineering	~		1		<b>~</b>	Engineering Applied L3
Agritech	~				<b>✓</b>	Geography A Level Environmental Science A Level
Business Services	~				<b>✓</b>	Accounting A Level Business A Level Business Applied L3 Business & Marketing L2 Economics A level
Construction	<b>*</b>		<b>√</b>		<b>✓</b>	Business A Level Maths A Level Maths GCSE
Creative content production and gaming		<b>V</b>			✓	Computer Science A Level IT AAQ L3 Media Studies A Level Graphic Design A Level Computer Games Design

Digital & technology			<b>✓</b>		✓ ————————————————————————————————————	Computer Science A Level IT AAQ L3 Media Studies A Level Graphic Design A Level Computer Games Design
Health and social care	✓		<b>V</b>		<b>✓</b>	Biology A Level Health & Social Care AAQ L3 & Applied L2 Health T Level Human Biology AAQ
Health tech and med tech		✓ 			<b>✓</b>	Biology A Level Health & Social Care Applied AAQ L3 & Applied L2 Health T Level Human Biology AAQ
Leisure, travel and tourism				✓	<b>✓</b>	Travel & Tourism Applied L3 Food Science & Nutrition Applied L3
Logistics and distribution/haulage		<b>✓</b>	<b>√</b>		<b>√</b>	Maths A Level Maths GCSE
Manufacturing			1			
Manufacturing of future housing		✓				
Manufacture of electric light vehicles and associated battery devices		<b>✓</b>			<b>√</b>	Engineering AAQ L3 Physics A Level Maths A Level
Modern and low carbon utilities		1			<b>√</b>	Environmental Science A Level
Professional and financial services and supply		<b>V</b>			✓	Accounting A Level Business A Level Business Applied L3 Business & Marketing L2 Economics A level Maths A Level Further Maths A Level Maths GCSE Core Maths
Public services				✓	<b>✓</b>	Economics A Level Geography A Level History A Level Law A Level PE A Level Politics A Level Psychology A Level

			Sociology A Level
Science and Maths	✓	~	Biology A Level
			Chemistry A Level
			Engineering AAQ L3
			Human Biology AAQ
			Maths A Level
			Further Maths A Level
			Maths GCSE
			Physics A Level
			Core Maths
			Geology A Level
			Environmental Science A Level
			Psychology A Level

The College's investment in STEM subjects is notable with a £3.1 million investment in phase 2 of the Science Centre creating four industry standard laboratories and specialist preparatory room and classroom space in addition to the four laboratories created as part of phase 1. Each year the College has success in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Maths Olympiads/Challenges indicating the emphasis the College places on real world application of science and maths problems. With 311 students studying Core Maths, the College is better preparing students to enter the workplace through enhancing their mathematical skills beyond what is expected in the curriculum. The College is also highly successful in supporting students to gain their Maths GCSE where they did not pass in the first instance (48.7% achieved grade 4 or above compared to 17.1% nationally). This along with similar success in English GCSE resits (73.2% achieved grade 4 or above compared to 20.9% nationally) helps create a cohort of young people suitably qualified to enter the workforce in the areas identified.

Through extensive participation in additional qualifications (e.g. EPQ, Core Maths) and enrichment such (e.g. Ambition Programme, Student Union), the College also develops students skills to enable them to become more rounded individuals prepared for higher education or to enter the workplace and these skills (e.g. presentation, communication, organisation and community centred) are valued by employers. In any given week, 50% of students take part in some form of enrichment. The skills and qualities developed as part of these additional programmes are inherent of those identified locally.

The College has a Foundation Year programme enables learners studying below level 3 to make sufficient progress. Students are able to complete Level 2 courses with the aim that they are qualified for progression at College on Level 3 courses or elsewhere. The progress of these students is monitored in the same way as those on level 3 programmes with the same high expectations around attendance and attitudes to study.

The College is taking measures to ensure learners are well prepared to seek and be suitable for employment. The College addresses this through encouraging all students to participate in enrichment to develop social skills and through supporting students to be successful in their outcomes and aspirational about their progression options. Subject related and other enrichment also develop work ready skills, in particular the Professional Programmes in Law, Teaching, Medicine, Nursing and Midwifery and Paramedic Science and Real Estate. The College has introduced Microsoft accredited Certificates to respond directly to skills identified as lacking in the Local Skills Report. These are focused, in the first instance, on students who have identified apprenticeships or employment as their progression route as they will be entering the workforce more imminently.

The College supports the Local Authority in meeting its duty in relation to young people at risk of becoming NEET. The College's Foundation Year programme for those learners not qualified for Level 3 programmes clearly prevents some young people becoming NEET as does the introduction of a T Level which will suit some learners who otherwise might not continue in education. The Foundation curriculum is carefully designed to indicate progression pathways either in the areas of Business, Health and Social Care and Sport, supported by a small number of GCSEs (Citizenship, Film and Photography) alongside Maths and English GCSE resits. The aim is to ensure that students enrol with a clear three year programme and identified progression aims during their time at College.

In relation to the College, a high proportion of students progress to higher education and apprenticeships demonstrating the impact of the curriculum and success in ensuring students leave College with strong outcomes. In 2025, 60% of students in year 2 progressed onto full-time education at university with an additional 16% who intend to apply to university after a gap year. 14% of the cohort secured apprenticeships, however, only a small number of these were at higher or degree level, reflecting the lack of opportunity for this age group with higher/degree apprenticeships in Worcester. In the current academic year, the College has taken steps to identify students who have indicated that they wish to secure an apprenticeship after they complete their studies, and this group of students will attend bespoke sessions aimed at supporting them both to secure an apprenticeship and to be aspirational in the type of apprenticeship they are seeking.

Through its curriculum, the College prepares learners to seek employment in 4 of the 6 key sectors of employment identified. Many of our students have local part-time employment and are prepared through academic study and personal development to be well equipped to seek future local employment.

The Heart of Worcestershire College and other FE providers in the county deliver qualifications in agriculture and construction addressing those areas of local need that the College is unable to respond to.

The introduction of the Health T Level is an excellent example of how the College is responding to a local priority. There are approximately 40,000 nursing vacancies in the UK (RCN) and many of these will be in the West Midlands. Applications for nursing degree courses are down with places not all filled this year. The pressures on the NHS are growing and yet the workforce is diminishing. By offering the Health T Level we are supporting hospitals with students undertaking placements and supporting HCAs carrying out simple tasks and supporting patients. The course inspires students whilst providing them with a taste of what a career in nursing is like and enables direct progression onto nursing degree courses. The placement of students itself is supporting the NHS.

In addition, the Human Biology AAQ which will be delivered from September 2025 allows students who would not otherwise qualify for A level Biology to access a similar programme opening up career progression opportunities in other medical professions that they may have missed out on due to the lack of a biological science. The investment in the Clinical Skills enrichment is a further enhancement of the strength of offering in this area.

The College introduced its first T Level in Education and Early Years in 2023 with significantly better retention and results after the first year than is typical nationally. Many of these students will enter employment after completion, where they do not progress onto high education degrees in teaching or similar, usually in work settings they have been placed with during the course.

Through strengthening the College's collaboration with local employers, it is anticipated that this will create more work experience and volunteering opportunities for its students. This in turn, will engage students in the key sectors of employment identified locally and consequently respond to the skills

need. The College would willingly promote any incentives offered by local employers aimed at encouraging well-qualified young people to seek employment locally after securing higher level qualifications or training e.g. sponsorship, internships.

Through the introduction of the Impact programme and plans for Impact Week in June as well as through other means, every student will have the opportunity to access and experience one week of work experience, or attend workshops aimed at increasing their awareness of the post-18 options available to them as well as providing them with opportunities to develop different skills.

Engagement with employers is critical to ensure that the College is responding to local need. The College continues to build relationships with employers in a diverse range of sectors, e.g. residential student placements with the Army at Crickhowell in Wales, computer science placements at Qinetiq in Malvern where students worked on a mock project for the MOD. The College secured over 500 work placements for its students last academic year in a variety of industries and over a large geographical area including Birmingham.

The College has further developed its relationships with local employers to increase awareness of the potential our students can offer to the local economy. For example, staff from Qinetiq visited the College to see our new STEM building and a group of students took part in 'Sparks Live' at DRP Group to experience creative professionals in action. In addition to this, ten local employers joined us for Mock Interview Week to interview and give feedback to students who looking to enter the job market after College and eleven local employers also joined us for our College Careers Fair to showcase the opportunities and roles in a variety of local industries.

The College also works collaboratively with other local providers both in Worcestershire and Herefordshire and across the Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust. We continue to participate in meetings with the Local Enterprise Partnership and work with employers across the county both to meet requirements in terms of industry placements and to ensure that students have access to a wide range of employers in terms of work placements and subject specific knowledge.

# Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability

The College's approach to the developing this Accountability Statement has included:

- Ensuring alignment with other stakeholder plans and priorities.
- Consulting with key stakeholders including meetings with local FE and HE providers.
- Utilising labour market information to identify key employment opportunities in the county
- · Gathering feedback from employers throughout the year
- Ongoing review of the College's curriculum ensuring alignment with national skills policy and priorities.

#### Collaboration

- The College continues to collaborate with other local providers to identify any collective actions to better meet local needs. There are four Further Education colleges in Worcestershire; Heart of Worcestershire College, Kidderminster College (part of Newcastle College Group) and Pershore and Evesham Colleges (part of Warwickshire College Group).
- Chairs of Governing Boards and Principals from these establishments meet quarterly for updates on regional skills needs and to consider collaborative opportunities.
- The College has representation, wherever possible, on the Worcester Association of School Heads (WASH).
- The College has a close working relationship with the University of Worcester to promote clearer progression pathways and support for the University's PGCE programme where the College supplies placements to a teacher trainees.
- The College has a positive working relationship with Worcestershire Acute Hospitals to deliver our successful Health T Level.

# Progress against the aims for the 2024/25 academic year

Aim/Target Outcome	Comment
Further increase the proportion of students progressing to more aspirational universities, in particular, Russell/Sutton universities and those securing degree level apprenticeships.	60% of all year 2 students progressed to university. 16% intend to apply to HE in 2026. 31% of those students who progressed to university, progressed to a Russell Group establishment (compared to 29% in the previous year).
Further increase the number of students participating in organised work experience/volunteering	702 placements were organised for students in 2024-25. 85% of year 12 students
Implement and review Impact sessions aimed at supporting progression	Successful introduction with a focus on activities to support progression, use of Unifrog etc. Positive student feedback.
Deliver an Impact Week in the summer term	Successful programme with 66 activities put on over the course of a week.  Excellent uptake of work experience.
Continue to review the level 2 curriculum to ensure appropriate progression routes.	Ongoing.
Monitor and review suitable and available applied and AAQ qualifications to ensure there are no gaps in the curriculum and that there are suitable progression routes for students who would otherwise have studied applied courses.	Introduction of Human Biology AAQ in September 2025 and move to AAQs in Engineering, Health and Social Care and IT.
Further engage with T Levels as a sustainable element in the College's curriculum	Business Marketing T Level to be delivered in 2026

#### Plan for 2025/26

## Aims/target outcomes for the 2025/26 academic year

Continued focus on raising student aspiration to increase the proportion of students progressing to more aspirational universities, in particular, Russell/Sutton universities and those securing degree level apprenticeships. This will include conversations with HE institutions who have developed

practice of offering unconditional offers to our students, hence undermining their ambition with the potential to hinder future job prospects in an increasingly competitive job market.

Further increase the number of students participating in organised work experience/volunteering and reflect on post-work placement practice.

Review Impact Week to maximise the ability of students to participate in activities and/or work experience opportunities.

Review the impact of unconditional offers on student achievement and aspiration and address this matter with the University of Worcester.

Further engage with T Levels as a sustainable element in the College's curriculum. Continue to support the NHS to address their workforce needs through the provision of the Health T Level and expand other employer contacts to establish placements for T Levels in additional specialisms.

Continue to monitor and review suitable and available applied and AAQ qualifications to ensure there are no gaps in the curriculum and that there are suitable progression routes for students who would otherwise have studied applied courses.

Continue to review the level 2 curriculum to ensure appropriate progression routes.

### **Corporation Statement**

On behalf of Worcester Sixth Form College, it is hereby confirmed that the College plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Local Governing Body at their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

Worcester Sixth Form College confirms that it has fulfilled the Local Needs Duty.

The plan will be published on the College's website and can be accessed here: Governance and the Multi-Academy Trust - Worcester Sixth Form College (wsfc.ac.uk)

Chair of the Local Governing Body

Date: 1010912025

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# Supporting Documents and Sources of Information

Worcestershire's Local Skills Improvement Plan

Local Skills Report

Worcestershire LEP Plan for Growth

West Midlands Combined Authority Employment and Skills Strategy 2024 - 2027

West Midlands State of the Region 2024-25

West Midlands salary stats

Salary Stats

Worcestershire salary stats

WLEP Economy Report 2025

Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy