

via email

Friday 7th May 2021

Dear Stakeholder

I am writing to update you about developments that are underway at Evesham College, both in terms of the College estate and the future direction of the College.

As you may be aware, when WCG merged with South Worcestershire College in 2016, SWC was experiencing significant quality and financial challenges hence it sought a merger partner. At the time of merger achievement rates for students were below national averages, at around 70%, and positive destinations for students after leaving College were poor. In the past 5 years we have moved achievement to around national rates at 83% and positive destinations to 89.5% , giving more students better life chances. We also achieved a 'Good' Ofsted grade in 2018.

Having improved quality at Evesham College, we are now moving to the next phase in its development, which is to re-shape the College to have a much more technical and professional focus, meeting the economic needs of the area and complementing provision at other post-16 providers in the area.

This new focus will be on subjects in the disciplines of Engineering, Construction, Motor Vehicle Maintenance, Graphic Design, e-Sports, and Hair, Beauty and Barbering. The introduction of the new e-Sports and barbering courses in recent years have proved successful. We will also continue to provide key skills such as English and mathematics, aimed especially at adult learners. There will be very few courses that are discontinued as part of these changes; some will move from Evesham College to Pershore College; some adult courses will move from daytime to evening; and many will continue, subject to recruitment as is a standard approach to all courses, at Evesham College. The only courses which will no longer be offered at either of our Colleges are Early Years Educator, where recruitment has been very low for the last three years and the courses can be accessed elsewhere, and the Supporting Teaching in Schools & Colleges (Teaching Assistant) will become an apprenticeship as the onset of the apprenticeship levy has seen schools/colleges demand an apprenticeship route rather than a full time course route.

Work will begin this Spring to transform the college estate over an 18 month period, with improvements being made initially to existing workshops and to relocate some of our studios. The main focus will be our Technology Block, where new plumbing and expanded carpentry workshops are being created, and the Creative Block which is being digitised to prepare it for housing our growing e-Sports course and Graphic Design provision. These key changes will be complete by September, ready for the new cohort of learners. Some £1.2 million is being spent across Evesham and Pershore Colleges to improve the estate, with two thirds of this expenditure at Evesham College.

WCG | WARWICK NEW ROAD | LEAMINGTON SPA | CV32 5JE



A second phase in the site development will be the re-purposing of our building on Cheltenham Road to become the new reception, administration block and location for student services - this will be ready during 2022, and will at that point become the main entrance within the new college layout.

As these developments progress over the coming 12 months, currently under-utilised buildings at the front of the current college layout will be gradually closed off and our aim is to release part of the site for development. It is important to note that while the Government has this year, for the first time in a decade, announced some capital funding for Colleges, this funding is accessed via a competitive bidding process and we therefore have to continue to seek ways to enhance the utilisation of our estate and to secure ways to finance continued investment. In turn the smaller campus will be more efficient to aid long term sustainability and will be a more vibrant place for our students.

All of this work is being undertaken with the aim of ensuring the long-term viability of Evesham College, against a backdrop of more than 10 years of government cuts to the funding of adult learning. I am pleased to say that despite the constraints we are working under, we are still retaining a significant level of adult learning at Evesham College with some 67 courses being offered in the coming year across a wide range of subjects, to help upskill and retrain adults in Wychavon, in addition to the provision that is on offer at nearby Pershore College, just 5 miles away. We also believe that our 16-19 year old students are already benefiting from a modernised curriculum and attainment levels have risen considerably, ensuring we can play our part in the social mobility challenges of the District.

We are excited by these developments, which will effectively transform Evesham College into a new college, with high standards of delivery and a technical curriculum that now provides opportunity from Level 1 up to Level 6 with our Honours degree in Engineering, giving young people and adults in the region the opportunity to complete all levels of their learning locally. It goes without saying that our Apprenticeship delivery is also planned to grow across Worcestershire, with Evesham College as the core delivery venue for nationally important professions such as Engineering and Construction.

I hope you may have seen that we have recently announced that we are the first College Group in the country to gain Bachelor Degree Awarding Powers and we will, over time, enhance our higher education offer as a result.

As part of the developments underway at Evesham, we have taken the decision to merge the Supported Learning provision of both Evesham and Pershore Colleges at our Pershore site, which will allow these learners to enjoy a broader curriculum offer all on one site and will enhance the experience of our supported learners. We are also transferring the Health provision to Pershore College, where it will complement the other disciplines that we teach at Pershore. These two changes will be effective from September this year.

I look forward to your continued support as we make these changes at Evesham College, where our newly defined focus is upon **Building, Creating and Designing New Futures** for all our students.

We will be issuing a press release next week to update the local community about these changes, and will start to use the branding device below, in all our communications, to signal this new direction for Evesham College.



If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Stay safe. Best wishes



Angela Joyce
CEO WCG