

Wright Robinson College

Wright Robinson College is a highly successful 11-16 secondary school serving the population of East Manchester. This is an area of the city being regenerated but it still has many areas of severe deprivation. There are 1749 students on roll, 1000 boys and 749 girls. The College is one of the leading designated Specialist Sports Colleges in England and Wales. In 2007, the staff and students were proud to be named the most improved of nearly 3,000 schools with Specialist Status. It provides students with outstanding opportunities and facilities in a wide range of subject and extra-curricular areas.



The college has consistently outperformed expectations in terms of the achievement of students. From a position of less than 40% of students achieving 5A*-C in 2004, it has recently posted results of 76%. Results improved by a remarkable 21% in 2007. For the last three years, the college has scored at least 10 percentage points higher than expectation for 5+ GCSEs at A*-C grade including English and Maths.

Wright Robinson College is the only school in the City of Manchester to significantly score above average results, based on CVA, for the last three years.

The general level of student ability is well below average on entry i.e. a significant number of students have poor literacy and numeracy skills. The college's staff has had to work hard to seek out new ways to engage and motivate its students in order to accelerate learning gains.

Staff and students moved into a new £43M building in September 2007. Every teaching room is geared up for modern learning and teaching, with projectors PCs, Visualisers, Apple Mac Laptops, CAD/CAM facilities, and a variety of other ICT equipment. Students have access to what can only be described as the best sport and PE facilities. The College can even boast to having a Hair and Beauty Salon. All of these facilities are designed in the knowledge that students will be motivated to achieve and succeed in their lives.

Ofsted described the College as *“an oasis, a safe haven of quiet learning during lesson time and a fever of productive activity during breaks and lunchtimes. The magnificent sports and computer facilities are used to excellent effect by students in their own leisure time. Wright Robinson College provides a good overall level of education for its students. Among its strengths are the outstanding curriculum it offers, both academic and extra-curricular, the good quality teaching and learning it gives its students and the effectiveness of its senior leadership and management team.”*

At Wright Robinson students start their GCSE courses one year early, in Year 9. This Pathways Programme gives students the opportunity to study GCSE subjects a year earlier than usual, allowing a personal and individual curriculum for all. This enables all students to achieve and enjoy subjects that will positively impact on future career aspirations. Evidence has



shown that this has improved the motivation of students, with 2009 results showing a five-fold improvement in the number of A* grades. This included 17 A* grades achieved by one student whose personalised pathway included academic and work-related qualifications.

Behaviour at the College is very good. Ofsted said *“Especially notable is the mutual respect between staff and students and among students themselves in the classrooms, workshops and sports halls.”* This is achieved by the ‘Behaviour for Learning’ policy which gives a strong foundation for excellent teaching and learning to take place. Students are well aware of the consequences of poor behaviour and as a result, the building is a calm and quiet place to enjoy learning. Students choose to work hard in partnership with staff and as a result make excellent progress. Wright Robinson has high expectations and sets clear limits in terms of behaviour.

The college has committed additional staffing to English, Maths and Science, in order to create smaller classes so that students receive more individual attention. For example, this regularly allows Maths teachers to work with small groups of 4-6 students. The college also has a number of students and staff involved in one-to-one tuition after college.

In September 2007, the Key Stage 3 curriculum was radically changed at the College. This has involved specifically tailoring learning to individual students needs and provided opportunities to clearly focus support and intervention where it is required.

In September 2008 the College introduced the Cross Curricular Dimensions. This involves a whole college approach to learning and has enabled the staff to take whole year groups out of College for Active Learning Residentials and participate in regularly ‘themed’ activity weeks such as ‘Healthy Lifestyles,’ ‘Identity and Cultural Diversity,’ and ‘Global and Sustainable Development.’ Ofsted said *“The college’s excellent curriculum has richness and breadth and is very carefully adapted to suit the wide range of abilities and talents of students.”*

An intensive transition programme enables the college to forge successful links with partner primary schools. This includes the sharing of teaching staff to teach Dance and Modern Foreign Languages. All subject areas have a dedicated teacher whose role includes the early gathering of information on attendance, behaviour and the academic ability of pupils. This allows the college to put in place a differentiated curriculum as soon as students enter Wright Robinson.

Our continuing success is down to no magic formula but to knowing our students and their learning styles, providing a curriculum that meets their needs, consistently good teaching and regularly monitoring progress. Our staff monitors student achievement against set targets that raise expectation, using the whole-college tracking system. Senior Managers can quickly identify students and groups that are underperforming, and make timely interventions in order to narrow the gap in achievement against their peers. We know what works and will continue to adapt our curriculum to further our success and that of the students we serve.



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[All quotations are taken from the College’s Ofsted report January 2008]