

# The Sheffield College

General further education college

## Inspection dates

22–25 January 2018

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>	16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Adult learning programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Not enough students on study programmes and adult learning programmes achieve their qualifications.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good, and varies too much between subjects, sites and levels.
- Leaders, managers and governors have taken insufficient action to address weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and have started only recently to make a difference in some of these areas.
- Students' attendance is too low, particularly in English and mathematics lessons.
- Students do not develop their English and mathematical skills well enough; the proportion of students who achieve their English and mathematics qualifications is too low.
- Too many staff take insufficient account of students' individual needs when planning learning, and the targets that they set do not support students' development well enough.
- Too many students and apprentices do not understand how the risks of radicalisation and extremism relate to their everyday lives.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Strong partnerships with employers and stakeholders have created an effective curriculum that meets local needs.
- The recently changed senior leadership team and governing body have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college, and are beginning to take actions to tackle weaknesses.
- Most apprentices, and most students on foundation learning programmes who have high needs, make good progress from their starting points.
- Most students and apprentices progress to further and higher education and employment on completion of their programmes.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- The Sheffield College is a large general further education college serving the city of Sheffield and its wider City Region. It has four main sites across the city. The college provides 16 to 19 study programmes, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships and specialist provision for students who have high needs. In 2016/17, the college had over 16,000 students completing over 21,000 qualifications.
- Sheffield has a population of approximately 575,000 and is the third largest English district by population. In 2016/17, school leavers in Sheffield had relatively low attainment with 59% of school leavers achieving five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4, including English and mathematics, compared to a national average of 63%. The Sheffield local authority was ranked 115 out of 150 on the same measure.
- Unemployment in the city, including youth unemployment, and the proportion of adults without any formal qualifications are above the national averages. The proportion of workless households is significantly greater than the Yorkshire and Humber average. The local economy retains a strong advanced manufacturing sector but most employment is within the services sector, particularly in health, social care and finance.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the pace of change in tackling weaknesses in order to improve outcomes for students.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment more realistically, and tackling key areas for improvement
  - ensuring that teachers pay close attention to the individual needs of students when planning teaching, learning and assessment, so that students make the progress of which they are capable
  - making sure that the targets set for students focus on the skills that they need to develop rather than solely on the completion of tasks
  - monitoring closely the progress that students make towards achieving their targets
  - identifying and sharing good practice between teachers.
- Improve attendance rapidly, particularly in English and mathematics, by making sure that staff have high expectations for attendance and follow up poor attendance and punctuality promptly.
- Ensure that all teachers enable students to develop their English and mathematical skills within their main programmes.
- Make sure that all students and apprentices are fully aware of how to keep themselves safe from the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Governors, senior leaders and managers have been slow to address many of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Following recent changes to personnel in the governing body and senior leadership team, they now have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They have maintained the standard of provision in apprenticeships and in provision for learners with high needs, which were judged to be good both at the previous inspection and at this inspection.
- Recent actions taken by the new principal, although very embryonic, are beginning to have a positive impact on the performance of the college. Leaders now have a clear and realistic strategy for the college, with a focus on transforming lives through learning. They have reviewed the curriculum and plan to develop it closely in line with the local and regional priorities of local enterprise partnerships in sectors such as health, business and engineering. The principal and governors now work together more cooperatively and have embarked on implementing a comprehensive plan to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Until recently, leaders have had insufficient focus on ensuring that students develop their English and mathematics skills. In recent months, leaders have introduced and communicated well a comprehensive English and mathematics strategy intended to enable students to develop their English and mathematics skills and improve their employment prospects.
- Governors and senior leaders now evaluate the quality of provision more accurately. The information reported in the recently revised college self-assessment report broadly aligns with findings from inspectors. The resulting quality improvement plan contains well-targeted actions intended to improve the quality of provision, but it is too early to assess the impact of these actions.
- Managers' use of performance management systems has yet to demonstrate sufficient impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders and managers have identified accurately subject areas that are underperforming and, recently, they have focused their attention on improving these areas through lesson observations and support for teachers, in line with the quality improvement plan. Managers have recently revised and introduced more appropriate ways of evaluating and improving the work of staff. However, reports generated by managers after lesson observations concentrate too much on the activities of the teacher and not sufficiently on the progress that students make or the skills that they are gaining.
- Governors, leaders and managers have only recently begun to use reliable data and information to evaluate the progress that students make and the performance of different groups. Leaders now ensure that managers and teachers are accountable for the quality and performance of their subject areas through regular departmental review meetings. However, it is too early to see the impact of these actions on outcomes for students.
- Senior leaders have developed very good partnership arrangements and are working exceptionally well with strategic partners to develop apprenticeship opportunities and provide work experience placements for students. College managers and staff have been effective in the introduction of standards-based apprenticeships and are very responsive

to the needs of employers. Arrangements for managing the performance of subcontractors are well developed and effective. Senior leaders are aware of the performance of subcontractors and have reduced the number of subcontractors that they work with as part of their approach to working effectively with partners.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Over recent years, the governing body has suffered from a number of changes to its membership. This has impeded governors' ability to provide sufficient challenge to senior leaders to ensure that they tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and improve outcomes for students. Until very recently, governors did not demonstrate urgency in their actions, did not have access to helpful data, and did not scrutinise sufficiently the information supplied to them. The very recently appointed chair of governors has a thorough understanding of the actions needed to improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for students.
- Senior managers now keep governors better informed about the performance of the college. Governors have begun to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of the provision. They are aware, however, that there is still much more to do.
- Governors have become more self-critical and have embarked recently on a focused exercise to look at the effectiveness of their actions as governors and their impact on the college.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Students and apprentices feel safe at the college and in their workplaces, and most know to whom they need to report any concerns, including in subcontracted provision. Managers and staff are appropriately trained, and those responsible for safeguarding ensure that relationships with external and relevant agencies provide effective support for students. Managers implement appropriate safe recruitment processes and practices.
- Managers investigate referrals to safeguarding officers thoroughly, and follow up individual cases well to completion. They provide annual and regular training and updating for staff and governors to promote the understanding of the threats from radicalisation and extremism. However, too many students and apprentices do not recall or understand the concepts around the threats from extremism or possible radicalisation.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not of a consistently high standard. Leaders recognise this in the college's self-assessment report, but have been unable to secure improvements since the previous inspection. In too many areas, students are not making the progress expected of them. In a small minority of lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and students are keen. In subjects such as art and media, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), students make good or better progress and work with a clear purpose and good pace.
- Teachers do not use information about students' prior knowledge and skills well enough.

Too often, they do not use learning resources that are appropriate given the level of prior knowledge that students have about the subject, or ensure that students understand the tasks that they are working on. These weaknesses have a particularly significant impact on students with high needs who are studying vocational courses; a significant minority of these students find sessions too difficult and their progress is limited as a result.

- Too often, teachers on study programmes and in adult learning do not provide sufficiently helpful feedback to students about their work. Teachers and assessors do not set targets aimed at developing the skills of students and apprentices further. Targets focus on the completion of tasks rather than the development of skills, and feedback does not help students and apprentices to think about how to develop their skills. As a result, too many students and apprentices are not clear about what they do well, how they can improve their work, or how they can accelerate their learning.
- Teachers do not effectively incorporate English and mathematics in learning and assessment activities in almost all provision types. Many teachers lack the confidence to reinforce correct English writing skills and mathematical calculations. As a consequence, students make repeated mistakes in their work and do not learn a better approach to the tasks they are working on. Too often, they do not develop their skills to a higher level. The exception is on foundation learning programmes for students with high needs, where staff ensure that activities effectively develop students' English and mathematical skills.
- Across all provision types, staff have good subject knowledge and expertise which they use well to coach students and apprentices effectively to develop their practical and technical skills. In subjects where this is done particularly well, students and apprentices use industry-standard equipment and produce practical work of a high standard. For example, in dental technology programmes students produce crowns and bridge dentures to replace lost teeth. However, too many teachers do not ensure that their teaching in theory lessons inspires and challenges students. As a result, too many students are bored in these lessons, and do not respond to questions well.
- Teachers effectively use learning technology to help students develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to a higher level. As a result, most students develop ICT-related skills that will help them in the world of work. Students and apprentices in many subjects submit assignments online, with teachers providing prompt assessment. In games development lessons, students use industry-standard computers and software confidently to produce work of a high standard.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

- Too many students do not make progress and achieve their qualifications because they do not attend lessons. Managers have made concerted efforts to tackle poor attendance, which was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, through a range of initiatives. However, despite these actions, attendance remains too low, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Too many students on study programmes and in adult learning do not arrive on time to their lessons. Teachers do not challenge this behaviour adequately because their expectations of students are not high enough. As a result of poor punctuality, the learning of those who are present at the start of sessions is disrupted.

- Recently, managers and tutor mentors have reshaped completely their approach to raising students' awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They have rewritten the tutorial programme and attempted to make clear links between recent news stories and the risks of everyday life in Sheffield. However, students' understanding of the risks and their impact on the wider community remains too limited.
- Students and apprentices develop good practical and employment-related skills that boost their self-confidence and make them more likely to secure employment after their studies. Students who have high needs benefit from internships with a major department store, and develop customer service skills through their roles as sales assistants. Engineering apprentices master how to taper nozzles, finishing surfaces accurately using roughing and finishing cuts. However, too few students develop their English and mathematical skills well enough.
- Impartial careers information, advice and guidance are effective in enabling students to be placed on the right course when they start at the college. Early assessment identifies additional learning or support needs, and staff quickly implement the support to help students to achieve in line with their peers. Staff provide further advice and guidance to students during their programmes, and help them to make informed decisions about their future progression. As a result, the proportion of students who continue in their studies is high, as is the proportion progressing into education, employment or training after their studies.
- Most students on study programmes carry out an external work placement in an employment sector related to their main qualification. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when the number of placements was too low. Students reflect well on the experience gained on placements; this process helps them decide on their future careers, and encourages them to develop further the skills and disciplines they are acquiring through their programmes.
- Enrichment activities are well planned and extensive; they enable students to foster a sense of social responsibility through engaging in schemes such as the 'National Citizen Service' and through contributing to their local communities. For example, construction students have refurbished community centres. Students take advantage of the very good range of sports facilities to get physically fit and to improve their mental health.
- Tutor mentors work effectively with a range of external partners to support students who are at risk of leaving programmes early due to issues with welfare benefits, housing, mental health and substance misuse. As a result, more students now remain on their programmes compared with previous years.
- Students demonstrate respectful behaviour towards each other in classrooms and corridors, and show an understanding of British values through lively discussions about challenging and contentious topics, such as discrimination. Students and apprentices are well-behaved and collaborate well in classrooms and workshops.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- The proportion of students on study programmes and adult learning programmes who

achieve their qualifications is not high enough. Achievement rates are low in too many subject areas. On study programmes, the achievement rates in health and care, engineering, and social science are particularly low. On adult learning programmes, not enough students in construction, humanities, and business-related subjects achieve their qualifications; students also make slow progress in these subject areas. The achievement rates on adult learning programmes in health and care, information technology and leisure and tourism are high.

- The progress that students make in developing their skills in English and mathematics is not good enough in courses in these subjects. As a result, the proportion of students achieving GCSE high grades in English and mathematics is too low. The proportion of students achieving functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics requires improvement, especially for adult students.
- The progress of students on level 3 programmes is not rapid enough. The small proportion studying academic qualifications make slow progress from their starting points. The progress made by the larger proportion who study in vocational areas has improved significantly from the previous year, but is not yet good.
- The proportion of male students achieving qualifications is significantly greater than the proportion of female students. While college managers have identified the reasons for this on study programmes and adult learning programmes, they do not understand fully the reasons for this gap on apprenticeships. As a result, actions have not been successful in closing this gap.
- Apprentices make good progress on their programmes. The proportion who complete within their planned timescales is high, particularly for the large number of apprentices studying in health, engineering and business administration. Apprentices in beauty therapy and hairdressing do not make the progress expected of them, and the proportion who complete their programmes is too low. Although improving, the proportion of apprentices on advanced-level programmes who complete within their planned timescales is not high enough.
- The proportion of students and apprentices who secure sustained employment, education or training after their studies with the college is very high. The proportion of students progressing to higher education is increasing and is now comparable to that in similar organisations. The proportion of students on study programmes who progress on to an apprenticeship is high.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### Requires improvement

- The college has approximately 5,000 students on study programmes in a wide range of subject areas from entry level to level 3. The largest subjects are health and care, arts and media, hair, beauty and catering, and business-related subjects.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is dependent largely on individual teachers' craft and confidence, rather than on a shared culture of good practice among staff. Quality varies too much between subjects, sites and levels, and in too many subjects is too low. As a consequence, too many students do not make the progress

expected of them and do not achieve their full potential.

- Too few teachers make effective links between theoretical concepts and vocational practice. In a few instances, students successfully apply theory in classroom discussions, and demonstrate how it relates to their job roles. For example, students in childcare confidently discuss emergency first aid protocols. However, too many students do not have a deep enough understanding of how what they learn in the classroom relates to their future work.
- Teachers do not use teaching methods which develop deeper knowledge, skills and understanding sufficiently, particularly for the most able students. Most teachers do not make effective use of questioning techniques to check students' understanding of theoretical concepts. Too many teachers ask questions to the whole group, which leads to the most confident students responding. As a result, teachers do not check individual progress and understanding well enough before moving on to new topics.
- Students following vocational study programmes develop their practical skills well; in most cases, these are of the expected industry standards at their level. For example, in electrical engineering students worked competently and independently to remove thermostats before inspecting their functionality and reinstating them. As a result, students make good progress in developing these skills.
- Staff make useful assessments to establish students' starting points and record these in group profiles. However, too many teachers do not use this information well enough when planning learning and do not establish what students can already do. Consequently, too few students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the provision meets the principles of the study programmes. Courses are well planned and, in many cases, managers work in collaboration with employers to ensure that courses are responsive to students' needs. Students undertake relevant work placements and develop their employability skills through carefully planned and well-matched opportunities which help them to achieve their progression goals.

## Adult learning programmes

## Requires improvement

- At the time of the inspection, the college had approximately 4,000 students on adult learning programmes ranging from short courses aimed at improving employability opportunities to longer programmes such as access to higher education courses. In 2016/17, adult students at the college took nearly 9,000 qualifications.
- Too many teachers do not take into account students' starting points when planning learning. Teachers do not use the information that they have about individuals to ensure that learning meets the needs of everyone in the class. They do not use individual targets well enough to ensure that all students know specifically what they need to improve in their work. As a result, too few students reach their potential rapidly.
- Leaders and managers do not manage staff absence well enough. Cover arrangements are poor, and agency staff are too often inadequately prepared because they have been brought in at short notice. They do not have enough information about the prior knowledge of students and, as a result, lessons do not build upon previous learning well enough to ensure that students make enough progress.



- Too many students do not make the expected progress. In English and mathematics, which are studied by a large proportion of adult students, the quality of teaching is not good enough, and too many students make slow progress. By contrast, as a result of lively and enthusiastic teaching on ESOL and employability courses, the majority of students take a keen interest in their learning and make good progress in developing skills that will help them in the future.
- The vast majority of students on access to higher education courses progress to university in a related subject area. Around half of those who are enrolled in sector-based work academies find employment after their courses. However, too few students from courses delivered in partnership with Jobcentre Plus find employment after studying at the college.
- In the majority of sessions, teachers use their subject knowledge and experience to prepare students well for jobs in the sectors relating to the subjects that they are studying. Teachers use imaginative strategies to assess the progress that students make in developing their skills and understanding.
- Leaders and managers have carefully designed a curriculum which effectively meets the needs of adult students in the locality, particularly in relation to sector-based work academies and ESOL courses.

## Apprenticeships

**Good**

- At the time of the inspection, the college had approximately 2,100 apprentices in learning. The college offers apprenticeships in a wide range of vocational areas, the most popular being healthcare, childcare, engineering and business administration.
- Apprenticeships are managed well, and fully meet national requirements. Assessors and teachers ensure that employers are engaged actively in helping apprentices to make progress, and that on- and off-the-job training are well coordinated. Employers are keen to support apprentices to develop within their organisations. They provide a good range of interesting work and, as a result, apprentices develop good skills. For example, hospitality apprentices progress from basic food preparation to creating attractive, appetising dishes, and recognising the appropriate cuts of meat, herbs, spices and accompaniments that make a dish appeal to customers.
- Assessors provide apprentices with good pastoral support through reviews and in lessons, and quickly tackle any issues that may slow apprentices' progress. The rapport between apprentices and their assessors is positive and results in a trusting relationship. Apprentices appreciate this and improve their confidence; a high proportion achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales.
- Apprentices benefit from very helpful feedback from assessors and teachers that helps improve their work; most apprentices produce work to a good standard. Assessors and teachers effectively check and monitor apprentices' understanding so that apprentices gain a good understanding of industry-specific roles and responsibilities. For instance, during progress reviews and assessments, assessors ensure that engineering apprentices can explain the reasons for performing tasks such as using coolant when cutting steel on a lathe.
- Apprentices benefit from assessors' extensive industrial experience. Assessors make very

good use of the functions that apprentices perform within their jobs to extend the knowledge of other apprentices who fulfil different roles. They show how theory can be applied in practical situations to enable apprentices to be more successful at work. For example, an apprentice in horticulture developed knowledge about the names and characteristics of many different plants, and so was able to advise customers successfully on which plants to choose.

- Most apprentices develop their mathematics skills well at the college and in the workplace. For instance, plumbers calculate flow rate requirements for pumps in dishwashers, washing machines and disposal units, and pharmacist assistants develop their ability to calculate medicine doses before dispensing.
- Too often, assessors set targets which focus upon the completion of qualifications or tasks rather than the development of higher-level skills. Consequently, apprentices are not challenged consistently to develop their personal and work skills swiftly.
- Although the large majority of apprentices develop their technical language well, in too many cases apprentices' use of English does not improve well enough over time. Consequently, they continue to make errors throughout their work which could hinder their ability to perform roles to industry expectations.

### Provision for learners with high needs

**Good**

- At the time of the inspection, the college was in receipt of funding for 241 students who have high needs. Around half of these students were on foundation learning programmes with the other half studying in vocational programme areas.
- Managers, teachers and support assistants have high expectations of students in foundation learning; they use the allocated additional funding effectively to provide varied learning programmes which meet students' needs. Students on foundation courses take part in a wide range of practical and theory activities which develop their skills well. As a result, the vast majority make good or better progress.
- Partnerships with local schools are good. Managers work well with schools to ensure that students' transition into college is managed effectively. Students attend taster days to prepare them for college and to help them choose the right programme to meet their needs and aspirations. Appropriate support is arranged, including assistive technology, in order for students with complex needs to participate well. For example, students who need it have been provided with specialist technology so they can communicate using eye movements, and this has enabled them to complete the same work as other students in the group and participate fully in all learning activities.
- On foundation learning programmes, students are supported well by enthusiastic and experienced staff. Teachers and support staff plan and deliver lessons that motivate students and provide sufficient challenge at all levels. A good rapport exists between students and tutors, which encourages students to take risks and try new activities.
- Students who have high needs develop a good understanding of life skills and of the world of work through effective internships. Students complete internships at a large department store and a large engineering company where they demonstrate high levels of employability skills. They carry out various roles including working as a sales assistant, re-stocking, and working on computers across a range of departments. A job coach

supports students well in both locations; this helps students to apply what they have learned on their course to the workplace, including their English and mathematics skills. Previous interns have successfully been employed in both companies as a result of the experience that they gained during their internships.

- Students with high needs who are on vocational programmes make less progress, as teaching on these programmes does not take into account their individual needs sufficiently. Although students develop high levels of practical skills in workshops sessions, such as brickwork, they do not make the same progress in theory sessions and do not develop the same standard of written work as their peers.
- The large majority of students who have high needs make good progress and achieve their qualifications. Teachers and support staff provide informative and supportive verbal feedback to help students to improve their skills. A large proportion of students progress from foundation programmes to higher-level vocational courses across the college. Students on vocational courses have high aspirations and many plan to continue their education at higher levels, with four students holding offers for university places for next academic year.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	130531
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	16,049
Principal	Angela Foulkes
Telephone number	0114 260 2600
Website	www.sheffcol.ac.uk

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	1,208	1,960	1,171	1,182	2,635	817	1	81
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	478	501	308	601	10	239		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	241							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	CBD Training DC Training GSS Solutions Limited Peach Orator The Skills Network Meadowhall Training Limited Sheffield United Community Foundation Sheffield Wednesday Community Programme							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

### Inspection team

Ken Merry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Hunsley	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Mace-Akroyd	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charles Searle	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harpreet Nagra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
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