

Thomas Rotherham College

16 to 19 academy

Inspection dates

17–19 January 2018

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders, managers and teachers are not held to account sufficiently for their own performance and for the outcomes for students. Consequently, actions to bring about the necessary improvements identified in the college's self-assessment have not yet been effective.
- Governors have been distracted by their considerable work in securing the sustainability of the college through joining a multi-academy trust. As a result, they do not provide sufficient challenge to leaders to ensure that the urgently needed improvements to A-level outcomes are made.
- In too many subjects, teachers take insufficient account of the progress that students have made when planning and delivering learning activities. As a result, not enough students achieve their potential and the grades of which they are capable.
- The proportion of students who successfully achieve A-level qualifications is declining and is too low. In too many A-level subjects, students do not make the progress of which they are capable, given their starting points.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders, managers and staff have established successfully an inclusive college and a culture of respect that allow students from diverse backgrounds to work well together in a supportive environment.
- Students receive very effective advice and guidance, including about future careers, that enable them to make well-informed choices about programmes and subjects that help them to achieve their ambitions.
- A very effective tutorial programme and an extensive range of enrichment activities enable students to develop a good awareness about life in modern Britain, how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and how to protect themselves and others from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Achievement rates are high for vocational qualifications. Most students taking these qualifications make good progress and many achieve higher grades than predicted, given their starting points.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Thomas Rotherham College is located in Rotherham in South Yorkshire. It converted from a sixth-form college to a 16 to 19 academy in November 2017. At that time, it joined the Inspire Trust, which includes two local schools. Almost all students are aged 16 to 18, with a very small number of 19-year-old students remaining at the college to complete their programmes. Most students follow study programmes at level 3, with a small minority taking level 2 vocational programmes. Just under half of the college's students follow study programmes made up entirely of A levels and around one tenth follow entirely vocational study programmes. The rest of the college's students follow study programmes that are a mixture of A levels and vocational qualifications. Students who leave school and join the college without having achieved a grade C, or grade 4, or higher at GCSE in English and mathematics re-take these subjects as part of their study programmes.
- Unemployment in Rotherham is higher than the national average, and average wages are around 12 percentage points lower than the average for England. Around 20% of the college's students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, higher than the figure of 11% for Rotherham.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Governors and leaders must ensure that plans to bring about improvements are clear, identify precise targets for improvement, and state clearly who will be held accountable for achieving them.
- With leaders of the college, governors must review and improve the information that they receive about all aspects of college performance, in particular that relating to students' progress and achievement, so that they can challenge and support leaders effectively to bring about necessary improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and students' outcomes.
- Leaders and managers must take action to ensure that teachers are held to account for the progress that students make in the subjects they teach, so that:
 - teachers plan high-quality learning activities that support and challenge a much higher proportion of students to achieve their potential
 - the proportion of students who achieve high grades in A-level subjects improves significantly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Following very recent changes in the senior leadership of the college, leaders and managers are keen that the college quickly develops a culture of challenge and accountability to bring about the urgently needed improvements to outcomes for students. Governors and leaders have made many very recent changes, including the appointment of an interim principal and the introduction of new performance management approaches to establish clear lines of accountability and promote a lively agenda for change.
- Quality improvement planning by leaders has not been effective in addressing weaknesses across much of the college's provision, despite managers having identified these weaknesses accurately and clearly in their most recent self-assessment. The majority of the actions and targets set to improve the provision are not sufficiently specific to enable leaders, managers and governors to monitor them easily. In a minority of subject areas, students' outcomes are very good as a result of managers setting specific targets for improvement and monitoring their implementation closely.
- Governors, leaders and managers have been too slow to make the urgently needed improvements to A-level outcomes. Many aspects of students' progress and achievement that, at the last inspection, were identified as needing improvement have not improved, and a few have declined. Leaders and managers now recognise the urgent need to improve A-level outcomes for the majority of students and the need for clear lines of accountability for teachers and managers.
- There is insufficient accountability throughout the college. Leaders, managers and teachers have not been held to account sufficiently for their own performance and that of their students. Appraisals focus on positive aspects of teachers' performance and do not take sufficient account of feedback from lesson observations, including actions identified to improve teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, improvements that need to be made to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment do not happen and students do not achieve good enough outcomes.
- Leaders have prioritised effectively the need to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on GCSE English and mathematics courses. They have reduced class sizes, employed specialist teachers and allocated more time for these subjects. As a result, students now achieve well in these subjects.
- Governors and leaders have successfully sustained a broad A-level curriculum and a programme of vocational courses at levels 2 and 3. This enables students to combine academic and vocational studies as an appropriate continuation of their school curriculum. The curriculum choice available to students enables a high proportion to progress into higher education or employment.
- Leaders, managers and staff have successfully established an inclusive college and culture of respect that allow students from diverse backgrounds to work well together in a supportive environment. Leaders and support staff are fully aware of the few gaps in the performance of different groups and take effective steps to reduce these. Students who have special educational needs (SEN) achieve and progress as well as others. The college's TRC Active scheme supports students who have autistic spectrum disorder or

who are vulnerable to develop their social skills well.

- Leaders and managers take effective steps to ensure that students are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Support staff work well with a range of external agencies that contribute effectively to the extensive tutorial and enrichment programme. College managers have established an effective multi-faith chaplaincy which provides accessible information and advice to students and staff, and helps to raise awareness about, and tolerance of, different faiths and beliefs.
- Leaders and managers implement a range of innovative approaches to ensure that students are well advised about progression opportunities and make choices that help them to achieve their ambitions. As a result of the college's leading role in a Careers and Enterprise Company pilot project, students are able to access prestigious work placements. Two effective mentoring schemes with local universities support students, including the particularly vulnerable, to go on to university.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are well qualified and commit a great deal of their time to securing a sustainable future for the college. The college's membership of the Inspire Trust from November 2017 is a well-considered strategic approach with the ambition to improve quality and secure continuity of high-quality education from the age of three to 19 for the communities that the trust serves.
- Governors now recognise that they have been distracted by their considerable work in securing the sustainability of the college through joining the multi-academy trust. Consequently, they have not maintained a sufficient focus on monitoring the actions required to improve the quality of provision at the college, with the result that improvements have not been made quickly enough. They have not provided sufficient challenge to leaders to ensure that the urgently needed improvements to A-level outcomes are made.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers, teachers and support staff implement very thorough approaches to safeguarding. As a result, students feel safe and are kept safe. They report any concerns appropriately. Managers promptly addressed a minor reporting irregularity identified during the inspection.
- Leaders, managers and staff have forged excellent relationships with external agencies to make sure that staff and students are well informed about safeguarding matters. A dynamic safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty risk assessment ensures that staff offer the most up-to-date guidance and support for students about risks to their safety and well-being from current threats such as, for example, the 'dark web'.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently high across all subjects. Teaching on vocational courses enables most students to achieve well and achieve high grades. However, on too many A-level qualifications, teaching is not good enough and, as a result, too many students make slow progress.
- In too many A-level subjects, teachers take insufficient account of the progress that students are making to plan learning activities that support and challenge students to reach their potential. The most able students often complete activities ahead of their peers, and teachers rarely provide them with additional and more challenging learning activities.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not plan learning activities well enough to enable students to develop and practise the higher level skills, such as analysis and critical evaluation, that they need to achieve high grades. Teachers do not routinely give students enough time to reflect on and develop extended responses to questions that they ask, but too readily formulate the answers to their questions themselves.
- Too much of the feedback that teachers provide for students is not sufficiently clear or helpful to support and challenge students to improve their work and achieve their target grades. In the minority of cases where teachers do provide helpful and challenging feedback, students make good progress.
- Teachers are well qualified and have good professional expertise in the subjects that they teach. In music technology, for example, teachers use their professional expertise to guide students to select drum tracks to fit with their musical compositions. Teachers use their subject knowledge and expertise well to improve students' awareness about how the knowledge and skills that they gain will help them to progress to higher education and obtain employment.
- Through their good links with local schools, specialist support staff often have an in-depth awareness of the support needs of new students before they join the college, and they put effective arrangements in place to help those who need extra support. Teachers and specialist support staff work well together to identify quickly any further support needs that students may have through effective initial assessments when students enrol at the college.
- Having identified accurately that too many students do not make the progress of which they are capable, managers have recently introduced subject-specific support workshops on students' timetables. Students identified as requiring support are now expected to attend these, and those who do so speak highly of the support that they receive. It is too soon, however, to judge whether these new arrangements will have sufficient impact on improving the progress that students make.
- Teachers and specialist support staff take effective steps to engage with students' parents and carers. They keep parents well informed about the progress that students make and any concerns that they have. Through these effective links, teachers and specialist support staff identify specific support that parents can provide to help students to overcome any difficulties that could affect their attendance and work at the college.
- As a result of improvements that leaders and managers have made to the delivery of GCSE courses in English and mathematics, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects is now good. Across the college, teachers effectively help

students to improve their skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology.

- Teachers and support staff very effectively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum. As a result, students develop a very good awareness of social, moral and cultural issues.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Vibrant and interesting displays around the college and in classrooms promote students' understanding of cultural issues and modern British values well. Managers and staff ensure that the college's general and specialist teaching areas are well equipped and maintained.
- Students behave well in the college and demonstrate good attitudes to their learning. They are very respectful of staff and their peers, considering and valuing other people's points of view. Attendance is high in the large majority of lessons.
- Through their engagement in a well-planned and very effective tutorial programme and a wide range of enrichment opportunities, students improve significantly their awareness of a range of health and well-being topics, British values, and how to keep themselves safe. Students have a good awareness of the potential risks in their everyday lives from issues such as bullying, including cyber bullying. They receive good guidance about how to stay safe when using the internet and social media, and are well aware of the potential risks of using these.
- College leaders and staff take effective steps to ensure that students have a good understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Students have a thorough understanding of how to recognise and protect themselves and others from these risks.
- Managers, teachers and specialist support staff provide students with good personal and pastoral support. This is effective in helping students to overcome barriers to participating in learning and to remain on study programmes at the college.
- An increasing and now high proportion of students improve their skills in English and mathematics. This enables them to be better prepared for their next steps in learning and employment.
- Students benefit greatly from the wide range of advice and guidance, including careers advice, that staff provide. This enables students to choose subjects and learning pathways that support them effectively to meet their career and further learning aspirations.
- Students improve their work-related skills, their attitudes, and their understanding of the skills and behaviours that employers require through well-planned work experience or work-related learning activities. Managers makes a concerted effort to increase the number of employers that the college engages with to provide work experience, input at careers awareness events, and valuable contributions into live briefs for students in, for example, media and the performing arts.
- Students have a clear understanding of the target grades that they should be working towards to achieve their aspirations. They have a good awareness of whether they are ahead of, on, or behind target. However, in too many subjects, teachers do not provide

clear or helpful feedback to students who are behind their target so that they understand the steps that they need to take to improve their performance.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of students who achieve qualifications in all of the A-level subjects on which they enrol is too low. Achievement rates on A-level qualifications declined significantly in 2016/17 compared with previous years.
- In too many A-level subjects, including biology, chemistry, psychology, sociology and English language, students do not make the progress of which they are capable, given their starting points. These subjects account for a large proportion of the A-level enrolments at the college. Students achieve well and make good progress in a few A-level subjects, such as visual and the performing arts, and Spanish.
- A high proportion of students complete their study programmes. However, retention of students on a small minority of A-level subjects is too low.
- The proportion of students who achieve vocational qualifications has improved and is now high. Most students who take vocational courses make at least the progress of which they are capable and, in several subjects including sports studies and health studies, achieve higher than their predicted grades.
- A high proportion of students progress to positive destinations when they complete their study programmes. Around two thirds obtain places at universities, often being the first in their families to do so. A high proportion of these students obtain places at prestigious universities.
- The proportion of students who arrive at the college without a grade C (reformed grade 4) or higher in English or mathematics at GCSE and who improve their skills and achieve these grades is improving and is now high.
- Managers analyse in detail the reasons for any differences in the achievements of groups of students and take action to eliminate these. For example, they promptly identified in 2016/17 that the lower achievement of students who have a recognised learning difficulty compared with their peers related specifically to students who have dyslexia. As a result, managers have changed their approach to providing support for these students.

Provider details

Unique reference number	145230
Type of provider	16 to 19 academy
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,548
Principal	Stephan Jungnitz
Telephone number	01709 300600
Website	www.thomroth.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)	0	0	95	0	1,334	9	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	11							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal, curriculum and 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

Malcolm Fraser, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kathy Passant	Ofsted Inspector
Howard Browes	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018