

# The Sheffield College

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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**Unique reference number:** 130531

**Name of lead inspector:** Malcolm Fraser, HMI

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**Type of provider:** General further education college

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

The Sheffield College was inspected in January 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement. Inspectors judged that the effectiveness of leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and outcomes for learners all required improvement. Inspectors judged that 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes required improvement and that apprenticeships and provision for learners with high needs were good.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

### Themes

**Have governors and leaders put sufficiently robust actions in place to resolve weaknesses in the college's provision?**

**Significant progress**

The inspection in January 2018 recognised that the recently appointed chair of governors had a thorough understanding of the actions needed to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for students. Since the inspection, the chair has led the governors in implementing a range of actions that have improved governors' effectiveness. Governors have evaluated their individual skills, experience and qualifications and made well-considered changes to their roles and responsibilities to make best use of these talents. They have recruited new governors with specific skills and experience to supplement and strengthen the capacity of the board. Governors now have significantly improved access to reliable data about key aspects of the college's performance. Consequently, they are more able to shape effectively the strategic direction of the college. They now have the expertise and the information that they need to hold leaders to account for bringing about the necessary improvements.

Governors and the recently appointed chief executive officer and principal have implemented a comprehensive restructure of the senior leadership team. Recently appointed senior leaders have clearly defined responsibilities and performance management targets to improve the quality of provision and students' and apprentices' outcomes. Governors and senior leaders identified that a key priority to support improvement was their ability to access accurate management information readily. Appointed to the college in April 2018, the director of funding and performance has improved the accuracy of management and performance information available to leaders, managers and staff at all levels. These improvements have eliminated discrepancies between different systems, which previously allowed managers and staff to dispute challenges to their performance.

Leaders have recently implemented new performance management arrangements so that staff and managers at all levels can be held to account for their performance and the outcomes that students and apprentices achieve.

Leaders have created clear lines of accountability through a new faculty structure that they introduced at the beginning of this academic year. Each of the seven faculties is led by a newly created post of assistant principal. Leaders have established specific posts in the seven faculties to lead on curriculum management, English and mathematics, the quality of teaching and learning, and student experience and well-being. The three faculties that deliver apprenticeship programmes also have a designated head of apprenticeships. As this new management structure has been created very recently, several of the posts remain vacant. Leaders are right to recognise that their close attention to, and evaluation of the effectiveness of, this new structure will be critical in bringing about the required improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for students.

**What actions have leaders taken to improve the proportion of students who achieve challenging qualifications in English and mathematics?** **Reasonable progress**

Governors and leaders are right to recognise the need to strengthen significantly the leadership and management of English and mathematics provision so that the proportion of students who make good progress and achieve qualifications in these subjects improves. They have created and filled the new post of assistant principal for English, mathematics and inclusion. They have also invested significantly in new roles both across the college and within each faculty to lead on improvements in English and mathematics. However, it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

Prior to introducing structural changes for the start of the current academic year, leaders took specific actions in the spring and summer of 2018 to improve the progress that students make in English and mathematics. These included holding subject teachers to account more rigorously for their students' attendance at English and mathematics lessons and reducing the numbers of students who teachers withdrew from these subjects. Leaders insisted that staff gave specific support to students to re-engage them. The proportion of adults who achieved qualifications in English and mathematics increased in 2017/18. However, the proportion of students aged 16 to 18 who achieved qualifications decreased compared with the previous year.

**What steps have leaders taken to improve the proportion of students on study programmes and adult learning programmes that achieve their qualifications, and what has been the impact?** **Reasonable progress**

Leaders have implemented a range of well-considered actions, supported by challenging targets, to improve the proportion of students of all ages who achieve

their qualifications. However, their recent implementation meant that most actions had limited impact on improving students' outcomes between the inspection in January 2018 and the end of the 2017/18 academic year. Short-term remedial actions taken by leaders between January and June 2018, such as introducing higher expectations about students' attendance, successfully halted the declining trend in the proportion of students of all ages who achieved their qualifications. However, achievement rates, particularly for students on study programmes remain too low.

Leaders have established a clear accountability framework for the quality of provision and outcomes that students achieve through the implementation of the new faculty structure. Managers now have good access to accurate data about the performance of the staff and students for whom they have responsibility. As a result, leaders, managers and staff at all levels can be held to account rigorously for the progress that students make. Leaders have set challenging targets for improving the proportion of students who will achieve their qualifications over the next three years. They have based these on accurate assessments of current retention rates, the previous performance of the college and on national rates for individual subjects.

**How successful have the steps taken by leaders to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment been, and have they resulted in teachers taking sufficient account of students' individual needs when planning learning? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have implemented a range of appropriate actions to challenge teachers to make improvements to the planning and delivery of learning activities. This includes taking better account of students' and apprentices' individual needs and starting points. Staff who observe lessons have received training to help them make more accurate evaluations about the quality and impact of teachers' planning on students' learning and programmes. Through the recently introduced and strengthened performance management arrangements for teachers, managers consider a wider range of evidence to support their evaluation of students' progress. This includes the scrutiny of the work that students produce. Leaders rightly recognise that they need to strengthen the evidence available to hold teachers to account for the progress that students make towards achieving higher grades.

Leaders and managers provide teachers with improved staff development opportunities that meet their individual needs more effectively. As a result, teachers have improved their use of class profiles to identify and provide additional and specialist support for students. This helps students receiving such support to participate fully in lessons and improve their skills and knowledge. However, teachers are making slower progress in improving their skills in planning and implementing learning activities that challenge students and apprentices to achieve their full potential.

**Have leaders taken effective steps to ensure that teachers plan and deliver activities that enable students and apprentices to gain a good understanding about the risks of radicalisation and extremism? Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have reviewed key aspects of students' and apprentices' programmes, including their induction to the college. They provide plans for tutorial and enrichment activities to help students and apprentices gain a better understanding about the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Through the tutorial programme, staff have recently and effectively engaged students who are new to the college in activities which focus on protecting themselves and others from these risks. Most students and apprentices talk confidently about their understanding of these risks in the context of their lives in Sheffield and the surrounding area. Recent topics include recognising extremist opinions when using the internet and social media and the extremist attitudes associated with knife crime and gang culture. Students have a good awareness of how to recognise specific risks, such as unattended bags in public areas and the steps that they should take to reduce danger to themselves when visiting unfamiliar areas of Sheffield or other places. They also recognise the importance of making friends and family aware of their travel plans. Students who started college in the previous year and have returned this year to continue their studies have received only a brief update about the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

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