

# Inspection of The Sheffield College

Inspection dates:

24–27 September 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## **Information about this provider**

The Sheffield College is a very large general further education college. It recruits learners and apprentices from across the city of Sheffield and the wider Sheffield City Region. It has four main sites in the city. The college provides education programmes for young people, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships and provision for learners who have high needs. In 2018/19, the college had over 15,000 learners and apprentices enrolled on courses. At the time of the inspection, The Sheffield College provided education to approximately 5,000 learners on study programmes, approximately 3,500 learners on adult learning programmes, approximately 1,850 apprentices and approximately 240 learners with high needs. The college offers courses in all subject areas.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning. They want to do well in their studies, and engage in activities with enthusiasm. Learners and apprentices develop their confidence and self-belief with the support of staff. As a result, they think carefully about their futures. Most develop aspirational plans that staff encourage them to work hard to achieve.

Most adult learners follow programmes that enable them to develop the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve their immediate plans. Teachers plan and deliver courses for adult learners carefully and use their subject-specific expertise well to help adult learners understand how their learning relates to their future opportunities.

Learners who have high needs and who follow courses that develop the independence and skills required for employment make good progress in developing these skills. However, learners who have high needs and who study academic and vocational courses do not consistently receive the support that they need. As a result, too many do not make the progress expected of them.

Too many apprentices and learners on study programmes do not develop the knowledge and skills expected of them. How well they do is too dependent on the experience, knowledge and skills of individual tutors rather than a consistently high standard of teaching across all subjects.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and managers have a clear and well-founded strategic rationale for the college's curriculum. They carefully align the courses on offer to the Sheffield City Region priority areas. Working closely with local employers, leaders have very recently introduced a range of 'employer academies' where learners develop knowledge and skills specific to the industry to which they want to progress. For example, curriculum managers in digital industries involve employers so that they can provide learners with exposure to work-related situations and scenarios.

Governors are very supportive of the new senior leadership and management teams. They have enabled the principal to tighten performance management arrangements to increase the pace of improvements to the quality of education. However, it is too soon to judge the full impact of the challenge that governors now bring to the senior leadership team in too many areas of the college's provision.

Managers ensure that learners and apprentices have access to good pastoral support to help them overcome barriers to learning. A range of experienced staff are employed to provide support to learners and apprentices facing challenges in their personal lives. An increasing number of learners and apprentices struggle with their mental health. As a result, leaders now employ a team of well-trained 'listeners' to provide support when needed.

In many vocational areas, such as sport, media and hairdressing, study programmes are planned well to enable learners to acquire the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful. Teachers use their good industry experience to help learners understand how theory and practice link together. For example, in catering, learners at all levels develop basic skills such as knife work, common cooking techniques and baking methods. They build up these skills to more complex tasks or to cooking in larger quantities to replicate the commercial world. However, in a few subjects, such as carpentry and joinery, there is a lack of ambition in terms of what teachers expect learners to achieve over the time that they are at the college.

Leaders and managers have successfully improved the quality of education that adult learners receive. Curriculum experts structure the content of their courses to give adult learners the best chance of realising their planned next steps, making appropriate adaptations where necessary. A large proportion of adult learners studying access to higher education courses progress to their chosen university. The very large number of adult learners on courses in English for speakers of other languages improve their communication skills, and a large proportion secure employment, using the skills that they have acquired.

Curriculum managers and teachers have recently begun to identify more precisely what they expect learners and apprentices to know and be able to do as a result of the courses they study. This is enabling them to begin to improve the quality of education in the areas that they identify as not being good enough. However, the pace of improvement remains slow in too many areas.

Learners and apprentices demonstrate very good attitudes to learning. They apply themselves diligently throughout their learning activities. Most learners have good attendance at their learning sessions. Learners behave well in and around college, and apprentices display professional approaches at work. Learners and apprentices adopt safe working practices in practical environments that ensure they do not put themselves or anyone else at risk.

Leaders and managers ensure that learners receive effective and impartial careers education. Since the previous inspection, leaders have strengthened the internal careers team through the appointment of well-qualified and experienced careers advisers. All learners have access to the careers team throughout their course. As a result, learners receive useful support to help them develop their future plans.

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have taken action to address the significant weaknesses in the quality of education for learners and apprentices. They have addressed the habitual underperformance of staff working with adult learners, ensuring that the poorest performing staff leave the college. They have introduced focused professional development to encourage teachers to be more innovative in their teaching. This is beginning to improve the quality of teaching, but it is too early to judge the impact in too many areas.

Too few learners on study programmes and learners who have high needs on

academic and vocational programmes achieve their qualification, including those taking qualifications in English and mathematics. Too few apprentices successfully complete their apprenticeship. The proportion of apprentices who complete their course within the planned time is too low, particularly in motor vehicle and customer service.

Curriculum leaders and teachers do not use well enough information about what learners and apprentices do when they leave the college. They have insufficient understanding of how study at the college influences the next steps that learners and apprentices take when they complete their courses. The information that they collect is not precise enough and relies too heavily on anecdotal discussions. As a result, they are unable to use the information to help plan the content and structure of courses to ensure that they meet learners' needs.

Teachers and tutors do not routinely support learners on study programmes and apprentices to improve their knowledge and skills over time. Too often, assessment activities that young learners and apprentices complete do not help them to identify and correct misconceptions well enough. Staff do not provide enough encouragement to young learners and apprentices to help them to improve their work. They do not challenge them to work to a higher standard or require them to apply their knowledge or skills more comprehensively as a result of the feedback that they receive.

Staff do not work with employers well enough to plan apprentices' programmes. They do not consider sufficiently the contribution that employers' high-quality on-the-job training has on apprentices' development. They do not link it well enough to the off-the-job training that apprentices undertake. As a result, too many apprentices do not benefit from a well-sequenced apprenticeship programme. This slows the development of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need. Leaders have recently acted to address the slow progress of apprentices. However, these actions have not yet had an impact on increasing the proportion of apprentices achieving their qualifications within their planned timescales.

Too often, learners who have high needs on academic and vocational programmes do not receive adequate specialist support to meet their needs. Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the individual needs of these learners when planning and delivering their lessons. As a result, too many of these learners make slower than expected progress in academic and vocational subject areas. By contrast, learners who have high needs and follow courses that develop the independence and skills required for employment receive high-quality, well-planned specialist support that enables them to make good progress. Staff carefully use their experience and expertise to enable learners to understand how the knowledge and skills that they are developing will help them both now and in the future. These learners take responsibility for their own actions and build their confidence for life after college.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners and apprentices feel safe in all aspects of their study. They know to whom they need to report any concerns. The designated safeguarding officer and deputies are appropriately trained. Senior leaders maintain strong and effective relationships with external agencies to provide effective support for learners. Safeguarding officers investigate concerns carefully and follow up individual cases well to ensure that learners and apprentices stay safe. Most learners and apprentices have an appropriate understanding of potential risks to their safety.

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

- Leaders and managers should ensure that the pace of improvement quickens, particularly in the quality of education that most learners and apprentices experience.
- Leaders and managers should gain a much better understanding of how studying at the college influences the next steps and future careers of learners and apprentices. They should ensure that this information is comprehensive enough to inform the design of courses so that learners are better prepared for their next steps.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners who have high needs and who study vocational courses receive the support that they need from both teachers and specialist support workers.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that those responsible for planning apprenticeships take appropriate account of all aspects of apprentices' development, not just the parts that the college staff directly influence.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that the proportion of learners and apprentices successfully completing their course improves rapidly.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130531
<b>Address</b>	Granville Road Sheffield S2 2RL
<b>Contact number</b>	0114 2602600
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sheffcol.ac.uk">www.sheffcol.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Angela Foulkes
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22–25 January 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	A&S Transport Training Limited Manor Training and Resources Centre Peach Orator Sheffield Wednesday Community Programme Tarmac

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy chief executive, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the further education and skills inspection handbook and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff, governors and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Ken Merry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Angus	Her Majesty's Inspector
Malcolm Fraser	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jacque Brown	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Hunnisett	Ofsted Inspector
Saskia Niderost	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Hadfield	Ofsted Inspector
Philippa Firth	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Frear	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Marina Gaze	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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