

# Inspection of The Sixth Form College, Solihull

Inspection dates: 11–14 February 2020

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

## Information about this provider

The Sixth Form College, Solihull is a 16–19 academy that delivers academic and vocational programmes to 1,958 students. Some 56% of students enrol on an A-level programme, 30% enrol fully on an applied general programme, and 14% undertake a mixed programme of study. All students enrol on study programmes. Very few students are on provision for learners with high needs. Leaders offer courses in most subjects, with the largest areas being science, mathematics, social sciences, and business administration and law. The college is part of the Summit Learning Trust. It is located in an area of relative affluence, south-east of the city of Birmingham. Just over 75% of students travel from Birmingham, and some of these students live in areas of high social, economic and educational deprivation. Most students have a minority ethnic background. The college has one campus and does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Students enjoy their learning. They rightly feel valued and well supported by teachers in class. Students develop positive attitudes towards their learning. They work within a calm environment where they feel safe. They access good learning resources. Students feel that if they have any concerns, these will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly by staff.

Students benefit from a curriculum where they can study a wide range of A-level and vocational qualifications. Students are well prepared for their next steps. The vast majority of students are well informed of the range of next steps available to them on completion of their studies.

Students participate in a varied enrichment programme. They have opportunities to discuss and debate local issues which impact on their lives. However, in a minority of cases, the personal coaching that students receive is not specific to their needs and does not broaden their knowledge.

Students receive good teaching from experienced and dedicated staff who know their students well. Teachers help them to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time.

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

Leaders and managers have adopted a broad curriculum. Students select from 36 different A-level subjects, as well as a range of applied general vocational qualifications. Leaders work closely with a range of stakeholders, such as universities, so that they provide students with opportunities to follow careers that are in demand. Since the last inspection, leaders have raised staff expectations of students. Consequently, staff are ambitious for students and ensure that they have access to a challenging curriculum. The majority of students participate in a broad enrichment programme which supports them in developing their broader skills, such as teamwork and communication.

Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons that build on students' existing knowledge. They introduce the most important concepts early in the course. They help students to use them with greater sophistication over time. For example, in psychology, students are introduced early to debating and evaluation activities. Students quickly develop the skills to be able to judge the quality and credibility of different theories and arguments. Teachers regularly review the way they order their teaching so that students have the opportunity to revisit key learning. This helps students store key learning topics in their long-term memory. For example, in sociology, students cover research methods early in their programme and then apply research methods to different topics throughout their course. As a result, students can carefully consider research and its reliability.

In the vast majority of cases, teachers routinely use assessment well to support students to recall their learning and apply their skills. For example, teachers use an approach which includes preparation for an assessment, assessment and precise teacher feedback, followed by correction sessions, so students can begin immediately to address any gaps in their knowledge. This approach supports students to correct any misunderstandings they may have and develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. However, in biology, teachers do not provide the support students need to make sure they address the gaps in their knowledge. As a result, students in biology do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable.

Coaches develop students' understanding of local and national issues that impact on their lives through coaching sessions. For example, students asked for sessions on personal finance and mortgages. Specialised coaches deliver these to develop students' understanding of these topics. In the vast majority of cases, students value these sessions and rightly feel that they support them in being more aware of life in modern Britain. In a few cases, coaches do not support students well enough in their broader development. For example, they do not discuss students' physical or mental well-being. In a few cases, students do not find coaching sessions consistently engaging. These students are not as motivated to attend and interact in these sessions.

As a result of much-improved teaching, students are well prepared for their next steps. The vast majority of students move into higher education. Students receive valuable information on a range of next steps available to them and benefit from regular visits from universities. However, leaders do not ensure that all students receive information about apprenticeships as an option for their next steps. Since the last inspection, the proportion of students that achieve their qualifications has increased significantly, and more students achieve high grades. However, in biology the proportion of students that complete their programme is low. The quality of education in a small number of A-level science subjects is not yet good.

Students behave very well, attend their lessons on time and have a positive attitude to their learning. Students are very respectful to their teachers and peers. Students are very supportive of each other and work independently and effectively in communal study areas.

Students who have high needs benefit from the same good-quality education. Leaders ensure that the extra funding they receive is used to provide effective support to students. Staff plan well for the specific needs of students. They have benefited from professional development courses in neuro-diversity, which ensures that staff plan frequent opportunities for students to revisit information. As a result, students know and remember more over time. Consequently, the students who have high needs make the progress of which they are capable.

Governors, trustees and trust leaders know well the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They challenge senior leaders to improve the quality of education they provide to students. Governors carry out visits to underperforming curriculum areas,

such as biology. They are clear on the actions being taken to improve the quality of provision, but it is too soon to see the impact of these actions.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and teachers have created an environment where students feel safe. Staff are appropriately qualified in safeguarding. Managers have ensured that effective policies and procedures are in place for reporting any incidents. They deal with safeguarding concerns quickly. Leaders have good relationships with external agencies to ensure that students are well supported. Leaders are aware of localised issues, such as knife crime, and ensure that the curriculum informs students of these topics. As a result, students are better prepared to keep themselves and others safe.

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

- Leaders must evaluate fully the reasons why students leave their programme early. Leaders must take remedial action rapidly, so that more students remain on their programme and achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders must act swiftly to improve the quality of education in a small number of A-level science subjects, so that students complete their qualifications and achieve the high grades of which they are capable.
- Leaders should ensure that the personal coaching sessions that students receive meet students' individual needs. Coaches need to work with students routinely to identify the broader skills they need to develop. Coaches must support students to develop these skills through better-quality teaching that interests all students.
- Leaders must ensure that all students know the full range of options available to them on completion of their studies. Leaders must share information on apprenticeships and employment with all students, so they are better informed about their next steps.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144887
<b>Address</b>	Widney Manor Road Solihull West Midlands B91 3WR
<b>Contact number</b>	0121 704 2581
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<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Dr Martin Sullivan
<b>Provider type</b>	16–19 academy
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 January–2 February 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal for student experience and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, 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 and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

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