

Trinity Sixth Form Academy

Interim visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Sarah Lonsdale, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Sixth form college
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Interim visit

Context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

Information about the provider

Trinity Sixth Form Academy opened in 2013 as The Maltings College and subsequently became part of the Trinity Multi-Academy Trust. The academy moved to a new sixth form campus in the town centre of Halifax in September 2020, offering greater capacity for student numbers. The academy recruits a high proportion of its students from some of the most deprived areas of the borough of Calderdale.

At the time of the visit, there were 535 students on education programmes for young people. There were 49 students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and four students who have high needs.

What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?

Leaders explained how they maintained and adapted teaching and support for students during the initial period of COVID-19 restrictions, which coincided with the time at which they were opening a new campus. Leaders, managers and staff feel positive about how they have managed this significant change during the pandemic.

Leaders and managers changed the approach to teaching the curriculum in September when students returned on-site. Teachers now deliver lessons for one day per week for each subject, and plan additional independent learning activities for students. They feel that this approach enables students to develop and consolidate their knowledge. Leaders and managers plan to continue teaching in blocks when restrictions are fully lifted.

Leaders described how they used the findings from online lesson visits that they carried out to design and implement a standard approach to online teaching. They explained that lessons follow a three-part structure that allows teachers to provide information, check students' understanding and ensure that students can apply their

new skills. Leaders believe that this approach has created greater consistency in the delivery of the curriculum across the college.

Leaders and managers said that responding to changes in assessment and examination guidance during the period of restrictions has been challenging. Teachers have changed the curriculum to prepare students for assessment. For example, teachers of sports courses ensure that students complete at least one piece of coursework in Year 12 in case future restrictions have an adverse impact on examinations.

Leaders report a low level of staff absence due to self-isolation. They have managed to minimise the impact of staff absence by allowing teachers to deliver lessons remotely. Personal tutors supervise students in class while teachers deliver lessons digitally from home.

Leaders and managers provided training to help improve staff confidence in the use of digital technology. Staff valued the opportunity to work with colleagues to share skills and practice in teaching online. For example, mathematics staff trained colleagues in how to record and annotate lessons using interactive whiteboard technology.

What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?

Teachers consider that the lack of classroom-based learning during the initial period of COVID-19 restrictions reduced the opportunity for students to reinforce their knowledge. In response, they considered what elements of the curriculum lent themselves to being taught online so that students were able to learn new things. For example, students on an A-level politics course learned about ideology as this could be taught as a stand-alone module and students could conduct research from home.

Teachers changed the order of the curriculum in September to spend more time helping students to practise important skills. For example, teachers of A-level English introduced additional mock examinations to help students to develop their extended writing skills.

Teachers described how they use online resources to support students to study independently. Staff use digital notebooks, quizzes and online chat functionality for collaborative tasks and to monitor the work that students complete. For example, economics students use the chat function to simulate the tweets that the chancellor might have posted during his budget speech.

Leaders, managers and teachers said that some students find remote learning difficult due to their personal circumstances. Teachers provide additional sessions and online resources for students who fall behind. For example, art teachers produce

videos about 'gridding up' to show the effects of scaling up drawings. Students appreciate having these videos, which they can watch after class for revision.

Leaders, managers and teachers are pleased with students' attendance and behaviour, including those with SEND. Students told us that, although they took part in online learning, they missed contact with their peers during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Leaders, managers and staff have continued to provide careers education to students. Staff support students to research future options and university choices. Teachers organise remote communication with universities to compensate for the lack of physical visits. For example, a university doctor provided a talk for potential medical students about virology.

How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

Students said that they know how to report any concerns about their well-being or that of their peers. They feel confident that the COVID-19-related safety measures in college help to prevent the spread of the virus.

Staff described how they ensure that students learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Staff discuss online safety with students, covering topics such as data security, bullying and harassment, grooming and sexual relationships, to help reinforce key messages.

Staff worked with parents and carers to provide opportunities for students to visit the new building before September. They believe this was particularly helpful for students with SEND and Year 13 students, who were anxious about learning in a new place. Staff produced videos of the new building and the COVID-19 protocols to demonstrate to students how to keep safe.

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