

# Chesterfield College

Progress monitoring report

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Saul Pope, Her Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	General further education college
<b>Address:</b>	Infirmity Road Chesterfield Derbyshire S41 7NG

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Chesterfield College was last inspected in November 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These 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.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore, this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

### Theme

**What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?**

**Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have focused closely on improving the quality of teaching. They have continued to provide teacher development activities throughout local and national restrictions, including a considerable focus on improving teachers' skills for online teaching. Early in the current academic year, teachers used this training to develop their students' remote study skills.

During most online classes, teachers use a suitable array of digital techniques and activities to engage with their students. Students contribute to lessons in a variety of ways, which prevents learning from becoming monotonous. Most students attend

and participate well, and they rightly value extra small-group support they get from teachers if they are struggling with a topic.

However, in a minority of cases, teachers do not use online tools such as break-out rooms effectively, or they use too many online applications at once. This inhibits whole-group discussions, or means that some aspects of live teaching become disorganised. A small number of teachers also lack confidence when integrating video materials into class presentations.

Teachers plan their courses logically over time. This means that students gradually build their skills before tackling more challenging activities. For example, biology teachers focus A-level students on revising foundation topics before moving on to more challenging but related material. Students rightly feel that this enables them to develop their understanding of complex topics well.

Teachers have adjusted learning plans under COVID-19 restrictions so that students can still complete practical tasks. For example, students on level 3 media courses plan and make documentaries despite having more limited equipment available to them at home.

Students from a variety of courses benefit from using the college's virtual learning environment (VLE). Teachers have made useful adaptations to materials on the VLE, such as adding detailed voice recordings to presentation slides. Construction level 1 and 2 students use VLE resources alongside online lessons to develop their understanding of hand tools.

The large majority of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), produce work that is of a reasonable standard. A smaller amount of work is of a high standard, such as GCSE English work demonstrating impressive emotional depth and a wide range of language features.

In too many cases, students use punctuation poorly and make basic spelling mistakes. At times, this makes it difficult to understand written work. Teachers identify spelling and punctuation issues in their feedback to students, but do not support them closely enough to make improvements. Other feedback to students, for example on how to improve the content of written work, is more effective.

Vulnerable students can study in person at the main college site. While on site, they receive support to access the same online lessons as their peers, as well as a wide range of pastoral support. Managers and the safeguarding team remain in frequent contact with vulnerable students to check on their well-being.

Leaders and managers have made improvements to support for students with SEND. This includes improvements to students' education, health and care plans so that they better match students' needs. Teachers attend SEND-specific training, such as developing inclusive learning environments. They describe changes they make to better support their students, and rightly identify how these changes can benefit the whole class.

Students with SEND, including those with high needs, value the support they receive at college. For the large majority, this support has continued smoothly during national restrictions. In-class support from proactive learning support assistants helps students with SEND to understand tasks fully and work independently. In a very small number of cases, students with dyslexia are unsure how they can get additional help while studying remotely.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have focused on improving advice and guidance for students. There is now a more comprehensive tutorial programme. Progress coaches ensure that students receive a variety of support, such as to develop their employability skills or for their mental health. Students rightly find the support from coaches to be very useful.

Leaders have aligned careers guidance more closely to courses. For example, construction students benefit from employer-led presentations. They understand how to apply for apprenticeship roles, or have been inspired to secure additional work experience opportunities. Students, including those who were previously disengaged from mainstream education, better understand their future career options following presentations from college staff.

In many cases, COVID-19 restrictions have disrupted well-considered work experience plans. Where possible, students have continued to gain work experience. For example, media students produce video content for a local newspaper while they study at home.

Leaders and managers have placed a strong emphasis on students and staff staying safe online. Students understand the college's standards and expectations, such as using a neutral background during video calls. They know who to contact if they want to report a safeguarding concern.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that teachers make fully effective use of online tools available to them during live teaching sessions
- ensure that all students are supported to improve their spelling and punctuation skills.

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