

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College

Progress monitoring report

Unique reference number:	130411
Name of lead inspector:	Gayle Saundry, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Sixth-form college
Address:	74 St Charles Square North Kensington London W10 6EY

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College was last inspected in January 2020. 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 students, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of students 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 students 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 students' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?

Reasonable progress

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College has just over 1,000 students, who study courses between levels 1 and 3. Approximately two thirds of students study a vocational curriculum and the remainder study A levels. Almost all students currently attend lessons online.

Leaders have arranged provision for a full timetable of live teaching online during lockdown. Students enjoy their lessons, which they describe as being comparable to those taught face to face. Students on vocational courses are confident they will

achieve their qualifications, and are able to explain what they have learned and the new skills they have gained in their recent lessons.

Teachers of vocational subjects plan their curriculum well so that students are able to build on their existing knowledge and skills when learning new topics. For instance, in performing arts students progress from writing informal blogs about their performances to constructing a formal funding application for the Arts Council. Teachers use a range of effective activities to engage students with new content in online lessons, such as direct and probing questioning. Students value the feedback that teachers provide to them during lessons through one-to-one messages using the online chat function.

In some A-level subjects curriculum leaders have successfully replanned their curriculum as a result of the challenges posed by the pandemic. For instance, in A-level biology, teachers reordered the curriculum in the spring term to focus on topics that require fewer practical activities, such as the study of mitosis and meiosis. Leaders have begun to work with curriculum managers to adapt their A-level curriculum plans to a two-year linear course. However, their progress towards this goal varies between subjects and not all curriculum leaders have planned a curriculum effectively that enables students to develop their knowledge and skills across two years.

In their assessment of students' prior knowledge at the start of the course, teachers do not gain a sufficient understanding of what students already know, and do not know, about the subjects they are studying. As a result, teachers are not able to tailor their curriculum to meet the needs of all students. A-level teachers do not always make skilful use of strategies to assess whether all students have learned each lesson's subject content in order to adapt their plans for that and future lessons.

Since the most recent inspection, leaders have introduced a new assessment strategy in which teachers conduct frequent formal assessments of students' work and set activities for them to improve. Whilst this provides senior leaders with a regular snapshot of student achievement, teachers too often set targets for students, in particular those on A-level programmes, that are insufficiently challenging and which do not focus enough on students developing a greater depth of subject knowledge and understanding.

Students with special educational needs value the support they receive from learning support assistants during lessons. Staff provide a range of support options for students who require it, including access to specialist mental health services. The safeguarding team and tutors make frequent welfare calls to students who are vulnerable to check on their well-being. Students feel safe at college and when learning online.

Leaders have continued to provide students with a broad range of careers advice and guidance activities, including support with university applications, online careers events and virtual work experience. Leaders have successfully implemented a new

attendance and punctuality strategy which has improved students' understanding of the importance of punctuality, and reduced the level of lateness to lessons.

Governors are not sufficiently informed of the current strengths and weaknesses of the college. The board and senior leaders recognise the need to further strengthen their expertise in sixth-form education in order to support and hold senior leaders to account.

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

- continue to develop the A-level curriculum with a focus on developing students' knowledge and skills across a two-year curriculum, supported by a system of effective assessment and student feedback
- ensure that the governing body has a sufficiently detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college, and that governors hold the necessary expertise to support and hold senior leaders to account.

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