

# The Sheffield College

Progress monitoring report

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Steve Hunsley, Her Majesty's Inspector
<b>Inspection dates:</b>	3–4 February 2021
<b>Type of provider:</b>	General further education college
<b>Address:</b>	Granville Road Sheffield S2 2RL

## Monitoring visit:

### Context and focus of visit

The Sheffield College was last inspected in September 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**

Leaders have continued to prioritise aligning their provision with the needs of employers across the Sheffield City Region. Employer-led skills academies across several of the curriculum areas in the college help learners to gain an improved understanding of the skills and knowledge that they will need in their chosen careers. For example, learners on construction courses benefit from seminars and demonstrations that relate to working on large construction sites. The local chamber of commerce has introduced a college-wide employment skills academy which advises and encourages learners from all curriculum areas to explore the benefits and options regarding running their own business.

In conjunction with the employer-led skills academies, staff provide effective careers information, advice and guidance which enables learners to make informed choices about their future careers. This has been particularly useful for those learners whose initial choice of employment has been limited by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders continue to focus closely on improving the quality of education. Leaders and managers use the college's quality assurance processes effectively to evaluate teachers' performance and improve their skills. Leaders meet monthly with managers to evaluate learners' progress and review the quality of the provision.

During the pandemic, managers have planned and sequenced the delivery of the curriculum to enable learners to attend the college to develop their practical skills, when appropriate and possible. However, it is too early for managers to evaluate how effective this approach has been in helping learners to gain the skills that they need in their future job roles.

Leaders, managers and staff have reviewed the technology that learners are able to access away from the college, in preparation for any further COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders provided relevant guidance and information on their expectations of learners when learning remotely and on what learners could expect from the college. They have ensured that most learners have access to the necessary software licences and have provided laptop computers for learners who need them. However, a few learners find participating in online learning a challenge due to family commitments and access to appropriate computers at home.

Learners find their learning enjoyable and suitably challenging. Leaders consider that, as a result, learners are making good progress. Learners benefit from accessing their lessons online and through a mixture of face-to-face teaching and independent study tasks. When learners are not able to access online material or find it difficult to learn remotely, staff support them to attend the college to complete their work and help them to attain the skills and knowledge that they need to be successful.

Leaders make appropriate arrangements for vulnerable learners to study on college sites. For some learners, this has ensured that they have a safe place to study and, for others, it has helped them to overcome the difficulties of accessing online learning at home.

Leaders have put in place a supportive staff development programme to raise standards in teaching and learning. Over recent months and as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme has been adapted to help teachers improve their digital skills. Teachers now deliver an increased volume of the curriculum online. They use a wide range of online resources and activities to help learners gain the knowledge and understanding that they need, to identify gaps in learning, and to assess learners' progress.

Leaders and managers have introduced a supportive welfare calling system for learners during the pandemic. Staff have benefited from additional training to

improve their awareness and their ability to recognise when they need to support learners who have mental health or well-being issues. Staff assess each learner's risks and ensure that each week an appropriate person contacts learners who are at high risk. Learners value the calls and feel that staff are appreciative of the issues that they face during the current restrictions.

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

- evaluate how effective the sequencing of the curriculum has been during the pandemic to enable learners to gain the skills and knowledge that they need in their future careers
- ensure that staff continue to support learners who find it challenging to work online when at home.

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