

Inspection of The Sheffield College

Inspection dates: 6 to 9 December 2022

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

Information about this provider

The Sheffield College is a very large general further education college. It has six main sites, including a specialist motor vehicle workshop at Olive Grove and a dedicated adult learning centre. Most students are from Sheffield and the wider city region. The college offers programmes in a wide range of subject areas.

At the time of the inspection, there were around 10,000 students and apprentices. Around half of these study education programmes for young people. There were 295 students with high needs and 1,433 apprentices. Almost half of the apprentices study programmes at level 3 and most of the other apprentices study at level 2 with a small proportion following level 4 apprenticeships.

Leaders subcontract the delivery of a small number of study programmes, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships to five main subcontractors. They work with a number of other general further education colleges and independent learning providers for the subcontracted delivery of apprenticeships on behalf of national employers in the construction industry.

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

Students and apprentices are enthusiastic about their learning and are committed to their studies. They are motivated to learn and take pride in the quality of work they produce. For example, students on catering programmes are proud to serve steak cooked using complex recipes to paying customers in the college restaurant.

Students develop high levels of confidence and resilience as a result of the support they receive from college staff. They value the new skills they learn at college and put these to good use in their wider social interactions. For example, adult students who study English for speakers of other languages feel less isolated as a result of their improving confidence in speaking English.

Apprentices benefit from collaborative working between their employers and college staff. In most cases, employers attend frequent reviews of apprentices' progress and provide constructive feedback on how well their apprentice performs in the workplace. As a result, apprentices understand well the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to develop in order to contribute effectively within their job roles.

Students with high needs enjoy a highly inclusive and supportive environment where they feel their support needs are understood and appropriate support is provided. Tutors provide tailored support to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which helps them to make good progress with their studies.

Students and apprentices receive relevant information about a wide range of topics designed to support them to stay healthy and prepare them for life in modern Britain. Tutors revisit and reinforce some of this content, such as citizenship and British values, but they do not check how well students and apprentices understand other aspects of this curriculum. As a result, some students are less knowledgeable about themes such as the importance of exercise and healthy eating.

Students and apprentices feel safe at college. They know how to report worries and they are confident that their concerns would be responded to quickly. Students and apprentices value the measures put in place to keep them safe at the college and they are clear that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

Leaders and managers have a clear plan to provide work-related activities and experience for all students on education programmes for young people. They involve employers effectively in the delivery of guest sessions and creation of assignments. For example, students on dental technology programmes benefit from hearing about orthodontics from National Health Service staff. However, in too many areas, not enough students participate in meaningful work experience. Where students do complete a work placement, they find it to be valuable in helping them to gain an insight into the world of work.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work very well with a wide range of stakeholders to gather information about local and regional skills priorities, including the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, Sheffield City Partnership, Sheffield City Council and the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce. As a result, they understand well the issues facing employers in the Sheffield City Region and make a positive contribution to the development of the regional skills strategy.

Leaders are proactive in their work with employers and other local stakeholders. They have arranged for employers to sponsor academies in 21 of the subject areas offered by the college. For example, WANdisco sponsors an academy to promote software engineering and potential employment in this sector. However, some of these academies are relatively new, so it is too early to identify the long-term impact for students and employers.

Leaders and managers have developed useful partnerships with other colleges and universities in the region. The local providers work together well to develop their understanding of the provision and facilities they each have. The partnership group, alongside Sheffield Hallam University, is working on the identification of subject expertise to determine the spread of higher technical qualifications in the region.

Leaders and managers work very effectively with employers to select, shape and teach the curriculum in several subject areas across the college. For example, leaders engage very well with a local employer to develop and deliver training to meet essential skills need in engineering. College staff teach apprentices on site at the employer's premises so that specific specialist equipment can be used.

In a few subject areas, however, the links that leaders and managers have with employers are not as well developed. Employers from sectors such as electrical installation and beauty therapy do not have as much input into the curriculum and the students do not benefit from the same level of exposure to the realities of working in those sectors.

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

Senior leaders are aspirational for the college to have a central role in the city of Sheffield and to contribute significantly to meeting local and regional skills needs. They offer programmes with a clear purpose to provide well-thought-out progression routes for students and apprentices. For example, apprentices studying the level 4 healthcare assistant standard can progress to the second year of a related degree at a local university.

Tutors in most subject areas plan and structure their programmes well. They consider carefully the content that they need to include and the order in which

topics should be taught to support students and apprentices to build and consolidate relevant knowledge and skills. For example, tutors on the access to nursing programme support students to secure their knowledge of cells and tissues before moving on to learning about reproduction. However, in a small number of subject areas tutors do not plan such a coherent curriculum. As a result, students in these areas are less clear about the direction of their learning.

Most tutors make good use of the information they have about what students and apprentices know and can do at the start of their programme. They plan the curriculum to meet the specific knowledge and skills needs of students and apprentices. Tutors on specialist programmes for students with high needs use targets from education and healthcare plans well to define individual programmes. However, in a small number of subject areas, students do not receive the same consistency of support to help them to make progress in developing the knowledge and skills that they need to improve.

Most tutors make effective use of a wide range of methods and resources in their teaching. They are skilful in their use of techniques such as demonstration, recap and questioning to help students and apprentices to remember more of what they have been taught. For example, A-level biology students applied their knowledge of the Pacinian corpuscle to create a three-dimensional model of it before recording a demonstration with a student voiceover.

Most tutors successfully integrate the development of students' and apprentices' English skills into their teaching. Tutors support students on education programmes for young people well to develop fluency with technical vocabulary and to recognise the value of this skill. Tutors of students who have high needs help their students to recall key terminology to help them to remember what they have been taught in earlier classes.

Most tutors use assessment well to monitor the progress that students and apprentices make. They assess students and apprentices frequently and act quickly to intervene where an individual is at risk of falling behind. For example, on adult programmes for students with English as a second language, tutors test how accurately students use grammatical structures. As a result, students receive targeted support that helps them to improve markedly their writing skills. Most students and apprentices produce work of a high standard and successfully acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their chosen next steps. As a result, a high proportion of students and apprentices achieve their aspirations and progress to the next stage in their education or employment.

Leaders and managers have high expectations for the behaviour and conduct of students and apprentices. Most students and apprentices know what is required of them in lessons, come prepared to learn and respond well to instructions from their tutors. However, a small number of adult students studying GCSE mathematics disrupt lessons by trying to dominate discussions.

Leaders and managers provide a broad range of enrichment opportunities for students and apprentices. Students and apprentices can benefit from activities such as emotional intelligence masterclasses, biology field trips, listening to motivational speakers and international exchange visits. However, leaders and managers do not check that students and apprentices know what is on offer. As a result, the take-up of some of the activities that are offered is too low.

Students with high needs benefit from several opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. Many students attend a residential programme that develops their independence, self-esteem and social skills. Students pack their own cases, make their own beds and learn how to live and work with others. Parents and carers value this opportunity for their children and are positive about its impact.

College staff provide a very effective careers information advice and guidance programme for students and apprentices. They ensure that students and apprentices receive impartial advice that helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps. Staff arrange for students to participate in a range of activities to support progression to higher education, such as open days and masterclasses. As a result, high numbers of students progress to degree-level study.

Leaders recruit tutors who are well qualified and who have a good level of sector-specific expertise. They invest in a comprehensive training programme for teaching staff. For example, animal care tutors visit national and international employers to keep up to date and to observe good practice. A-level tutors learn how to embed research and examination skills into their teaching. Tutors use their expertise well to inspire and motivate students and apprentices to achieve.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken effective steps to improve the quality of education that students and apprentices receive. The actions they have taken include investment in learning resources and the implementation of improved quality systems. Leaders have also made significant improvements to the support available to students with high needs who study academic or vocational programmes.

Governors understand well the character of the college and they are proud of the strategic role the college plays in the city. They are very clear about their role and provide high levels of challenge to leaders in order to bring about improvements. Governors rigorously question leaders on the efficacy of their planned actions to ensure that they will bring about the intended impact.

Attendance at lessons is below the college target, particularly for students on education programmes for young people where attendance is too low. Leaders and managers recognise this. They have increased the number of personal tutors and student mentors to provide additional support for students with low attendance. For example, staff now challenge students who study electrical installation to improve their attendance and support the students to catch up with any work they have missed. However, it is too early to see the full impact of the new measures.

Leaders and managers thoroughly assess the performance of subcontractors. They successfully implement a range of plans to quality assure the teaching of subcontracted programmes. However, leaders do not have enough awareness of the intent of the curriculum that all their subcontractors deliver. Consequently, they cannot assure themselves that the college values are fully reflected in all of their subcontracted provision. For example, leaders and managers do not have enough information about how well inclusion is promoted in the curriculum offered by one of their subcontractors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding. Staff, students and apprentices consider the college to be a safe place to study and work. Leaders have been successful in securing 'college of sanctuary' status to make it clear to the community that they are welcoming of asylum seekers and refugees. They use local networks well to keep themselves up to date with risks that students and apprentices might face. They implement appropriate safeguarding policies that they update regularly to reflect relevant legislation and recommendations. Leaders took specific action in response to the findings from the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Increase the oversight of the wider curriculum to identify gaps in what students and apprentices know about health and well-being and to increase participation in the wide range of enrichment opportunities available to them.
- Ensure that the actions to improve the attendance of students enrolled on education programmes for young people are effective.
- Ensure that a greater proportion of students on education programmes for young people benefit from meaningful work placements.
- Improve the approach to the management of subcontractors to ensure that the college values are fully reflected in the implementation of the curriculum at all of these providers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130531
Address	Granville Road Sheffield South Yorkshire S2 2RL
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Website	www.sheffcol.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Angela Foulkes
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	24 to 27 September 2019
Main subcontractors	DC Training and Development Services Manor Training and Resource Centre Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Sheffield United Community Football (SUFC Steelphalt Academy) Sheffield Wednesday Football Club Community Programme

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy chief executive, 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 visiting 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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