

# Short inspection of City of Stoke-On-Trent Sixth Form College

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 April 2023

## **Outcome**

City of Stoke-On-Trent Sixth Form College continues to be a good provider.

## **Information about this provider**

City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College is a 16 to 18 academy. It is part of the Potteries Educational Trust. At the time of the inspection, 1,697 learners were enrolled. Most learners were working towards a study programme at level 3, with 129 studying a transition programme at level 2.

Learners study either an academic or a vocational subject pathway, which includes both A-level and vocational courses, choosing from 33 different A-level and 16 vocational subjects. The courses with the largest number of students are in science, mathematics, business, and social sciences. There were 16 learners who are in receipt of high needs funding.

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

Students benefit from a mature, caring environment at the college, where they are treated as individuals and supported effectively by teachers and support staff to achieve their qualifications. They are confident to ask for help. Students learn from mistakes in their work and improve throughout their time at college.

Teachers and leaders have high aspirations for their learners. They are committed to widening the opportunities for their students, including encouraging applications to prestigious universities. They use praise and reward to motivate students, and they respond positively. Students' attendance is high. They are respectful and engaged in their learning, and develop as independent students throughout their studies.

Learners feel safe at college. Teachers and support staff are approachable, and students know where to go for help. Students are taught a wide range of relevant safeguarding topics through the tutorial programme, including healthy relationships, knife crime and managing stress. As a result, they understand their local risks and know how to keep themselves safe from harm.

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

Leaders and teachers sequence learning effectively for students, building from foundation knowledge to more complex concepts and their applications. They use their understanding of local school curriculums to identify gaps in knowledge at the start of the programme. They plan the order of taught topics logically, for example in bringing all the plant-based topics together in biology to allow a greater depth of learning and to avoid repetition.

Teachers provide clear explanations and examples to help students understand new concepts and deepen their knowledge. They support students to extract key information from texts and increase their vocabulary. As a result, most students develop greater independence in their learning. However, in areas such as business studies, where there is more direct instruction from teachers, this independence is less well developed.

Teachers have developed a structured approach to assessment specific to the subjects being taught. In business, teachers use regular recaps, quizzes and formal assignments. In biology, students complete assessments frequently and assess their own work to develop a self-improvement plan. However, in a small number of cases, the feedback that teachers give is too directive and does not help students to develop their practice and understanding.

Teachers and support staff provide effective individual support for students to improve. In most cases, careful tracking and monitoring allow timely intervention for those learners making slower progress or who are falling behind in their studies. However, in a small number of cases, teachers' tracking is inaccurate, or they have not intervened quickly enough to support students who are working at a lower grade to improve.

Students with high needs are supported beyond their education, health and care plan to make the progress they are capable of in the college. For example, learners with disabilities are supported both with the adaptations for their disability and with developing their social skills and confidence to become effective independent students. As a result, they can confidently progress to higher studies.

Leaders have created a clear careers strategy which is linked to the fundamental principles of increasing access to higher education in an area with low participation rates. As a result, most learners know what they must do to apply for appropriate courses. However, the delivery of this programme is too reliant on independent learning, and engagement with the resources is not monitored closely enough. Learners who do not fully engage do not benefit from the support and guidance they need to make strong choices in their next steps.

Leaders have developed a clear and comprehensive quality assurance process that allows for middle managers to be reflective and reactive to their subject areas. As a

result, self-assessment of the areas is accurate and teaching staff, leaders and governors know what must be done for subject areas to improve.

Governors are aware of the strengths of the college and are passionate about their role in making improvements across both the trust and the college. They are keen to be practically involved, including with learner voice and support for safeguarding staff. They challenge leaders effectively to ensure that the decisions taken at a strategic and operational level are well considered.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that those with a responsibility for safeguarding, such as the designated safeguarding lead, are knowledgeable and carry out regular and wide-ranging training on safeguarding topics to allow them to execute their roles effectively. They share this training with teaching and support staff, who understand the important role they play in ensuring the safety of students.

Leaders and managers have comprehensive policies and procedures that they use to keep students safe. They follow their procedures closely and meticulously log concerns, issues and incidents to ensure that lower-level concerns are tracked, and that appropriate intervention is put in place swiftly. Leaders and managers follow safer recruitment procedures to ensure that staff are suitable to work with students at the college.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders should ensure that quality assurance processes continue to drive improvements across all areas so that all learners have the same opportunities and experience.
- Teachers should ensure that feedback to students is developmental, so that all students receive helpful feedback that helps them to improve throughout their studies.
- Leaders should ensure the accurate tracking of student progress and ensure that interventions happen swiftly to prevent students from falling behind.
- Leaders should ensure that the careers programme is taught to all students, so that they are able to make informed choices for their next steps in education or in their future career.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145003
<b>Address</b>	Leek Road Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST4 2RU
<b>Contact number</b>	01782848736
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.stokesfc.ac.uk/">https://www.stokesfc.ac.uk/</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Mark Kent
<b>Provider type</b>	16 to 18 academy
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	17 and 18 October 2017

## Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since City of Stoke-On-Trent Sixth Form College was judged to be good in October 2017.

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal, 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

Helen Morgan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jacqui Ecoeur

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