

# Inspection of Thomas Rotherham College

Inspection dates: 19 to 22 March 2024

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Thomas Rotherham College is a 16 to 19 academy and part of the Inspire Learning Trust. It provides A levels and vocational courses for young people in the borough of Rotherham and surrounding area. At the time of the inspection, the college had 1,471 students following study programmes, of whom 524 were on A-level courses, 403 were on level 3 vocational courses, 497 were following a mixed A-level and vocational programme and 47 were on level 2 courses. There were seven students with high needs.

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

Students have an extremely positive experience at the college. They benefit from high-quality teaching which enables them to make swift and secure progress. They learn substantial new knowledge and skills from their starting points. Almost all students successfully complete their courses and achieve their qualifications.

A high proportion of students progress to higher education, including students with low prior attainment. More than half of the graduates who progress from the college are the first in their family to go to university. Students who do not choose a university option receive good support in relation to their aspirations, and a significant proportion of these students move on to an apprenticeship or secure employment.

Staff have cultivated a highly inclusive and respectful environment in which they support students, many of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds, to understand the principles of equality of opportunity and to celebrate diversity. Students uphold these principles proudly in all aspects of college life. For example, students on the T level childcare course are encouraged to work in line with the mantra of 'be the reason why someone feels included, welcomed and valued'. Students in A-level English language discuss topics such as transgender pronouns, protected characteristics and appropriate language with tolerance and respect.

Students demonstrate exemplary behaviour everywhere in the college. They are highly respectful of staff and of each other. Students listen to others' opinions and value their peers' contributions to discussion. They discuss challenging topics sensitively, choosing their language carefully. They collaborate well with their peers to share ideas and formulate responses to teachers' probing questions.

Students are highly motivated to learn. Attendance is high and students are punctual to lessons. They take pride in their work and value their time in learning. They appreciate being treated as adults and the mature college environment. Students are eager to learn and feel accountable for their learning and progress. They are motivated by the high expectations placed on them and the belief of leaders and teachers in their ability to succeed.

Leaders have in place a well-planned programme of activities for students to explore and develop their interests and talents. Students can join societies to meet with others sharing similar interests, such as a feminist society and a 'pride' group. They can access clubs to develop and refine their skills in areas including debating, self-defence, British Sign Language and e-sports. However, participation in many of these activities is not consistently high. Leaders and managers recognise this and have a clear strategy to increase participation.

Students feel safe in learning sessions and around the college due to the high visibility of their staff and the signs of safety around them. They recognise the importance of adhering to security measures to ensure the safety of all those on

site. Students feel confident to report any concerns about their safety to any member of staff and trust that they will be taken seriously.

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

Leaders and managers have a very clear rationale for the programmes that they provide. They offer a highly ambitious curriculum which successfully meets the needs of their students, many of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and which is responsive to local and national skills priorities. Leaders realise this ambition by ensuring that students achieve outcomes that enable them to progress to the next stage of their education and career.

Teachers plan and sequence the curriculum highly effectively to enable students to develop their knowledge and skills over time. They ensure that students acquire sound concepts that they can develop further and apply in their studies. Students build their knowledge gradually and become increasingly confident in applying it in their subjects. For example, students in A-level mathematics build on their skills from GCSE at the beginning of their course before developing their knowledge of calculus and statistics. Students in psychology first learn about psychological approaches, research methods and academic writing conventions. They then apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations relating to issues such as stress, addiction and mental health.

Teachers are highly skilled and use effective teaching strategies. This includes skilful questioning, carefully managing discussions and using thought-provoking questions. Teachers set weekly independent learning tasks (ILTs), which students use routinely to consolidate their learning after each lesson. Each ILT features links to online content or articles where students can read an alternative explanation of the theories that they have learned in lessons. Students are motivated to complete their ILTs, which help them to feel more prepared and increasingly confident for future lessons and their examinations.

Teachers support students very well to prepare for the demands of their examinations. They carry out frequent retrieval activities at the start of lessons that remind students what they know and help to prepare them for examinations. Teachers modify the amount of waiting time that they give to students when asking questions in lessons, so that students experience the time constraints typical in examinations.

Students produce a high standard of work, in which they take pride. They use academic referencing confidently and extensively in their work and frequently use citations and examples to demonstrate their understanding. They are highly motivated to achieve high grades in their coursework and overall qualifications.

Teachers assess students frequently and accurately, and in ways which reflect examinations. They set a range of weekly and termly homework tasks, which give students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding while

building their confidence in tackling examination questions. Teachers use the results of assessment to plan learning to enable students to address their knowledge and skill deficits. They provide very helpful feedback, which helps students to understand how to improve.

Teachers embed English and mathematics very well into their teaching to develop students' skills. Students in applied information communications technology lessons develop their mathematics skills in real-world scenarios. Teachers in all subjects support students to improve their writing and communication skills. Students recognise the value of these skills to their success now and when entering the world of work.

Teachers are well qualified and have extensive expertise in their subjects. They maintain current industry knowledge through their work with employers, awarding bodies and professional networks. Teachers benefit from helpful training and professional development, including training in behaviour management, open questioning and live marking.

Most students benefit from work-related learning that prepares them for the transition to university and helps them to understand the range of jobs that their qualifications can enable them to aspire. For example, sports students work towards additional qualifications in areas such as indoor climbing and they shadow experienced climbers in the workplace. Law students benefit from talks from lawyers to inform them of the career paths and opportunities available to them. Geography students receive talks from town planning staff to inform them of job opportunities in the local council. However, on a few programmes, students have limited opportunities to interact with employers or to experience the world of work.

Leaders and managers work very effectively with partner organisations and stakeholders. For example, managers work in collaboration with the local general further education college to ensure that students are able to transfer to more relevant educational opportunities if their own provision is not the right pathway on enrolment or beyond.

Leaders and managers are aware of the workload and well-being of their staff. Staff feel able to approach leaders and managers to share any concerns that they may have. Staff feel supported by leaders in navigating any personal matters that may impact on their teaching roles.

Teachers provide good support for students with high needs and additional learning needs. They provide specialist software to help these students analyse data more easily and to write efficiently in timed conditions. Students benefit from appropriate arrangements to help them manage the demands of examinations, such as supervised rest breaks and extra time. As a result, students with high needs and additional learning needs make good progress in line with their peers.

Leaders and managers ensure that students receive effective careers information, advice and guidance to inform their next steps. Staff discuss subject choices in line

with students' career aspirations prior to enrolment and use taster sessions and induction events to confirm the choices that students make. Students learn about various progression pathways, including undergraduate degrees and apprenticeship opportunities, and can access ongoing careers support at any point from the careers team and their tutors.

Leaders and managers have in place an effective board of governors. Board members draw on their experience from industry, finance and education to provide effective challenge and support to senior leaders at the college. They provide prudent oversight over the financial position of the college, with the result that they can invest in improving teaching and learning resources to the benefit of students.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145230
<b>Address</b>	Moorgate Road Rotherham S60 2BE
<b>Contact number</b>	01709 300600
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.trc.ac.uk">www.trc.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Joel Wirth
<b>Provider type</b>	Sixth-form college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 to 3 October 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this inspection

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

Glenise Burrell, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Karen Anderson	His Majesty's Inspector
Jonny Wright	His Majesty's Inspector
Alison Dennis	His Majesty's Inspector

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