

Inspection of Thomas Rotherham College

Inspection dates: 1–3 October 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Thomas Rotherham College is a 16 to 19 academy and part of the Inspire Trust. It provides A levels and vocational courses for young people in the Borough of Rotherham and surrounding areas. At the time of the inspection, the college had 1,440 students following study programmes, of whom 575 were on A-level courses, 461 were on vocational level 3 courses, 284 were following a mixed A-level and vocational programme and 120 were on level 2 courses. Leaders offer a wide range of courses across many subject areas.

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

Students enjoy their time at the college and gain new knowledge and behaviours that prepare them well for their intended studies at university or in their future careers. They adopt a positive attitude to learning and demonstrate good behaviour. Students feel safe and are safe while attending the college.

Students benefit from a well-planned curriculum and a wide range of well-delivered courses. As a result, they improve their understanding and, consequently, know more and can do more.

Students benefit from effective teaching and carry out independent study well to complement activities in their lessons. They appreciate how the homework and independent study that they complete help them to increase their understanding of the subjects that they are studying.

Students value the self-confidence that they gain, and they become more independent in their studies and everyday lives. They particularly benefit from the opportunity to make new friends and acquaintances and the support provided by staff at the college. Students find the individual and small-group subject support sessions valuable in helping them build on their knowledge and understanding.

Students make good progress from their starting points and achieve their qualifications well. A high proportion go on to study at university or progress to their intended destination.

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

Leaders successfully provide a curriculum that meets the needs of the local community of Rotherham and the surrounding area. The curriculum is carefully designed and informed through effective links with the college's partner schools, both in the Inspire Trust and across the local authority. For example, leaders have recently re-introduced A-level politics following enquiries from students and their parents. Vocational courses at levels 2 and 3 complement the academic provision well. Level 2 courses provide a useful stepping stone for students aiming to progress to level 3 and then into higher education.

Leaders provide meaningful and useful professional development and support for teachers, particularly through helping them to improve their approaches to structuring the curriculum and delivering course content in a way that students quickly grasp. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to plan and deliver lessons that enable students to know more about the subject that they are studying. They challenge students by introducing complex concepts early in their course and by providing time and resources to enable students to practise, recall and retrieve learned knowledge. For example, students in business were able to produce high-quality market supply and demand graphs and explain the process through which they had developed this skill over time.

Teachers ensure that students are well prepared for their lessons by setting work to be completed prior to the lesson. Consequently, students are better equipped to learn and quickly build on their understanding of the subject. Teachers use students' prior knowledge to ensure that activities reflect the range of abilities and aspirations. They use their teaching skills well to ensure that students can remember more and know more through effective questioning and the frequent testing of students' knowledge. For example, in science the introduction to the principles of electricity is used well in scientific experiments to determine students' prior knowledge in the application of electricity.

Teachers and pastoral staff provide good support for students to ensure that they enjoy their time at the college and make good progress with their studies. Students benefit from useful study-support sessions, which enable them to improve their skills and knowledge and reinforce their understanding. Students who have additional needs receive effective help and support to enable them to access all of the curriculum and to study alongside their peers. As a result, they remain on their courses, contribute effectively in lessons, know more about their subject, and achieve in line with their peers.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations of their students' behaviour at college and in their communities. Students demonstrate a positive attitude to their studies and behave with respect both in class and around the college. They demonstrate high levels of tolerance and understanding in a multi-cultural college environment.

Leaders and staff provide effective, relevant and up-to-date careers advice and guidance for students and their parents, which include information regarding progression to university, further education and employment. Staff focus effectively on the future career aspirations of students during discussions. Students are well supported when making university applications, often to highly regarded universities as well as local institutions.

Thomas Rotherham College is well led. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the quality of their provision and have worked effectively to ensure that teachers review and plan the curriculum to enable students to study the subjects in a way that best meets their career aspirations. Leaders and governors have a good oversight of the quality of education provided by their staff and provide effective challenge and support for continuous improvement.

Teachers do not routinely challenge students who arrive late for their lessons. A small minority of students miss lessons altogether, particularly on vocational and level 2 courses. As a result, they miss vital components of the curriculum, take longer to catch up with their peers, and do not appreciate the importance of good timekeeping and arriving on time prepared for work.

In a few lessons, teaching is not structured well enough to enable students to build on their prior knowledge and understanding. In these lessons, teaching methods focus too much on students completing tasks and assignments, which does not help

students build on their knowledge or recall previous learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders and governors have ensured that appropriate and secure arrangements for keeping young people safe are in place. The designated safeguarding lead and the safeguarding team are appropriately trained and well informed through their effective links with external agencies with which they have forged good relationships. Leaders ensure that all staff are trained and kept updated on a regular basis. Students are safe and know how and to whom they should report any concerns that they may have, knowing that their concerns will be dealt with promptly.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that teachers challenge those students who arrive late for their lessons and encourage those students with poor attendance to attend their lessons more frequently.
- Support all teachers to plan the delivery of their subject and curriculum in a way that enables students to build on their prior knowledge, retain and recall previous learning, and make rapid progress.

Provider details

Unique reference number	145230
Address	Moorgate Road Rotherham South Yorkshire S60 2BE
Contact number	01709 300600
Website	www.thomroth.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Mr D Naisbitt
Provider type	16–19 academy
Date of previous inspection	January 2018
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent internal strategic monitoring 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 observing 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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