

# Nottingham College

Progress monitoring report

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	130776
<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Russ Henry, Her Majesty's Inspector
<b>Inspection dates:</b>	24–25 February 2021
<b>Type of provider:</b>	General further education college
<b>Address:</b>	Adams Building Stoney Street Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG1 1NG

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Nottingham College was last inspected in January 2020. 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 and training 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**

Since the previous inspection, managers have worked with staff to improve curriculum planning. Many staff have developed new teaching schemes that extend beyond the requirements of qualifications and address the needs of employers and universities. However, this has not yet permeated all areas of the college and in a few subjects, teachers continue to focus their teaching only on what learners need to do to pass their assessments.

Managers have resolved many of the staffing challenges noted at the previous inspection. There are now sufficient specialist teachers for health and social care apprenticeships. Although there remain some challenges within engineering apprenticeships, new staff recruits have substantially improved the picture.

Learners' attitudes to studying English and mathematics have improved. Teachers now contextualise these subjects effectively, relating them to learners' main vocational areas or their daily lives, and this helps learners to understand the relevance of these subjects. Managers have promoted good attendance more assiduously and this has contributed to improvements in English and mathematics achievements.

Governors now pay more attention to the quality of education offered at the college. Two new governors have particular knowledge of the further education curriculum. A new quality and learning committee scrutinises curriculum matters before these are presented to the whole board.

At the start of current pandemic restrictions, teaching moved online. For the most part, learners and apprentices attend live online lessons that follow a very similar timetable to the previous classroom lessons. Staff record most lessons and learners find these recordings useful for revisiting topics and reinforcing their understanding.

Teachers have made appropriate adjustments to the curriculum to take into account the challenges of learning remotely. For example, teachers of mathematics identified that learners find it difficult to complete work on graphs at home and have reordered lessons so that this topic will be taught when learners return to studying in-person.

Most staff plan and teach online lessons effectively. They organise material appropriately, provide clear explanations of topics, and make appropriate use of visual aids to reinforce key points. However, a small number of teachers sequence lesson material poorly, provide unclear explanations, require learners to complete tasks before they are ready, and use visual aids that contain spelling, punctuation and grammar errors. This was particularly evident in business studies lessons.

Managers have provided staff with extensive training on assessment and feedback since the previous inspection, but this has not yet led to consistent improvements. Although most teachers use questioning effectively during online lessons to ensure that learners and apprentices have understood material, a minority do not. Some teachers rely too much on whole group questioning and this excludes a few learners. Others use activities that do not really assess learners against the stated learning objectives. Others do not provide enough opportunities for learners to recall and practise what they have studied earlier in their courses.

Teachers mark work thoroughly and accurately. Most provide feedback that is clear and identifies both strengths and areas for improvement. Learners and apprentices often find it helpful to refer to this feedback when producing subsequent pieces of work. However, a few teachers provide feedback that is too vague to be of much help to learners and apprentices or do not return work quickly enough.

Staff make frequent contact with learners and apprentices who are studying at home to enquire about their welfare. Most learners appreciate this. In addition, learners are able to access an array of additional support services, including an online

'wellness café' that many find a useful resource for coping with stress and isolation. When learners disclose personal difficulties, staff refer them to achievement coaches or to external organisations that provide the help that they need. Apprentices are well supported in the workplace through a mentoring scheme.

Learners with education, health and care plans benefit from effective online reviews that involve college staff, learners, parents and representatives from external agencies. Staff ensure that learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive support while they are at home.

Managers have adapted the arrangements for careers advice so that learners and apprentices are able to access guidance remotely. Teachers continue to help learners to complete their university applications.

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

- improve the quality of online teaching in weaker subjects
- ensure that all teaching staff understand the purposes of assessment and are able to deploy a range of approaches to testing learners' knowledge and skills
- ensure that feedback on marked work is consistently good and provided in a timely manner.

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