

# Inspection of Dixons Free Sixth Form

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 May 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Education programmes for young people

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## **Information about this provider**

Dixons Free Sixth Form is a 16 to 19 academy. It is part of the Dixons Academies Trust, which includes primary and secondary schools. Dixons Free Sixth Form is the trust's first standalone sixth form and began providing education programmes for young people in Bradford in 2019. The college provides A levels in most subjects, with sciences, mathematics and psychology being the most popular. It also offers applied general qualifications in health and social care, sport and applied science. At the time of inspection, there were 1,071 students.

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

Students develop the qualities and skills that they need to thrive and succeed in education and society. They proudly embrace the concept of 'studentship' that staff promote and which cultivates the skills, behaviours and attitudes to be a successful student. They take ownership of their learning, and their behaviour is extremely polite and respectful. Students are eager to learn and are very well prepared for their next steps.

Students grow in confidence and resilience throughout their programmes. Staff are ambitious for their students, and in response students become more ambitious for themselves. Students speak highly of the support they receive from teachers and progress tutors, who motivate them to reach challenging goals.

Students flourish in the positive and welcoming environment at Dixons Free Sixth Form. They are empowered to understand and celebrate diversity, culture and individuality. They participate in their college and their community by, for example, volunteering to be reading mentors in a local secondary school, planting trees for environmental projects, sharing Iftar meals with the college community during Ramadan and holding LGBTQ+ Pride events.

Students successfully develop their personal skills and attributes through the experiences that leaders provide to all students in the college. These include trips to university cities and areas of natural beauty to participate in activities such as coastering, hiking and mountain biking. Students take part in enrichment opportunities, many of which are linked to their academic subjects. In addition, they attend a weekly lecture series on diverse topics outside of their qualifications, such as art appreciation and money matters.

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

Leaders and managers have an ambitious strategy for their college. They aim to help students, many of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds, to overcome barriers to their learning. Students achieve highly in their qualifications and are prepared well for their next steps, with most going on to study in higher education, including at prestigious universities.

Leaders and managers carefully craft their curriculum. The academic curriculum concentrates on providing students with qualifications which can combine well for successful applications to respected universities. The wider curriculum enriches students' experiences and raises their awareness of the wider world. Students develop as individuals and are very well prepared for their life beyond college.

A local governing board and a board of trustees for the multi-academy trust provide strong governance. Governors and trustees are highly experienced in relevant fields and have a secure understanding of the college, often coming into the college and

working with staff and students. They hold senior leaders to account successfully to make improvements and maintain the high standards set at the college.

Leaders and managers have in place rigorous procedures to assure themselves of the quality of teaching and assessment. They carry out frequent lesson visits, student focus groups and work scrutiny. Heads of subject meet weekly with their senior leadership team link managers to discuss and address any issues. Leaders also conduct quality assurance activities in selected subjects to follow specific themes that leaders identify. This work often results in the provision of additional training to benefit staff and students.

Leaders and managers provide teachers with highly effective, individualised professional development, based on first-hand research and contemporary education strategies. Teachers and progress tutors benefit from frequent one-to-one instructional coaching to develop their practice. They also use well-planned peer observations to share best practice and to carry out action research. Teachers develop their subject knowledge and their teaching skills as a result.

Leaders are considerate of the well-being of their staff, including their workload. For example, staff are given 'marking days' during busy periods of assessment. Staff speak positively about working at the college.

Teachers are highly experienced and well qualified and use this expertise to plan the curriculum very effectively. They adjust the curriculum in response to the progress that students make. For example, in A level psychology, teachers have moved research methodologies into year one so that students have more time to develop and practise this fundamental subject-specific skill. Teachers also ensure that students develop higher-level skills such as critical analysis and referencing in preparation for studying at university.

Managers and teachers listen carefully to advice from their stakeholders, including universities, and adapt their curriculum to benefit their students. For example, teachers in health and social care have added infection control to their curriculum to reflect the importance of this topic and the content that students may encounter in the first year of a degree.

Managers and teachers are ambitious for all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is frequent purposeful communication between teachers and the SEND coordinator, and teachers have a thorough understanding of any additional support that their students need. Teachers use individualised approaches to support all students effectively. As a result, students with SEND make progress in line with their peers and achieve very well.

Teachers provide consistently high-quality teaching across the college. They use a range of teaching methods expertly, which helps students to develop their knowledge and skills successfully. For example, teachers use a 'do now' activity to start every lesson to test and improve students' recall of the subject.

Teachers assess their students' understanding frequently, using this to monitor progress accurately and plan further learning. Students welcome the helpful feedback that they receive and act on the clear advice on how to improve. Teachers provide highly effective support for students during and in between lessons. Students consistently produce work which is at or above the expected level.

Well qualified and experienced progress tutors provide highly effective support for students, both academically and pastorally. They know their students very well, and students value and trust them.

Teachers develop students' skills in English and mathematics very well. They use assessment early in students' programmes to identify accurately gaps in knowledge that informs their teaching. For example, psychology teachers ensure that students have the required numeracy skills to analyse data sets. Leaders ensure that the very few students who do not have English and mathematics GCSEs at grade 4 or above receive high-quality lessons to support their achievement in resit examinations.

For the vast majority of students, attendance is high and most students are punctual. For the very small number of students studying GCSEs, and particularly in GCSE mathematics, attendance is lower. When students do miss classes, teachers have suitable arrangements in place to help them catch up.

Students receive highly valuable careers advice and guidance. They access an on-site careers adviser and take the opportunity to visit universities, attend careers fairs and benefit from a wide range of guest speakers. Students are inspired by these activities. For example, a talk by a radiographer resulted in eight students developing a career aim of becoming a radiographer. Students have a thorough understanding of a range of options open to them after college and what they need to do to achieve and succeed well in their chosen careers.

Most students achieve their qualifications with high grades and make excellent progress from their starting points. The vast majority of students go on to study in higher education, with most of the remainder beginning higher-level apprenticeships with renowned organisations or moving into employment.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take effective steps to ensure students are safe and know how to keep themselves safe. Those responsible for safeguarding are trained well and have the experience that they need for their role. There is a named governor with responsibility for safeguarding, which enhances the college's safeguarding arrangements.

Students feel very safe in the college and know how to report concerns. They value the secure environment and the zero-tolerance policy to bullying and harassment. Safeguarding concerns are followed up swiftly with prompt actions, involving

external agencies appropriately. Leaders frequently review safeguarding cases and procedures to further improve their practice.

Students understand the risks that they may encounter and are well informed through their tutorials on topics such as gang culture and forced marriage. When topics arise in the media, such as online misogyny and the dangers of echo chambers, staff respond to provide teaching and opportunities to discuss them.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143704
<b>Address</b>	Bowling Old Lane Bradford West Yorkshire BD5 7JR
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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Mark Rothery
<b>Provider type</b>	16–19 academy
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the senior vice principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and the previous new provider monitoring visit 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 students' work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Karen Anderson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Philippa Firth	His Majesty's Inspector
Ian Frear	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Benson-Smith	Ofsted Inspector

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