

Gateway Sixth Form College

Partial reinspection report

Unique reference number: 130755

Name of lead inspector: Shaun Dillon HMI

Last day of inspection: 7 October 2010

Type of provider: Sixth form college

Address: Colin Grundy Drive
Leicester
LE5 1GA

Telephone number: 01162 744500

Report:

Introduction

Gateway Sixth Form College is a medium-sized sixth form college that offers courses from foundation to advanced level. The college moved from Leicester city centre to a new building in Hamilton in the north-east of Leicester in August 2009. It is not a typical sixth form college in that nearly two-thirds of its students study at foundation or intermediate levels. Many students enter the college with low prior attainment. Approximately two thirds of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2009/10, the college enrolled 1,125 students aged 16 to 18. The mission is 'Striving for excellence in all we do'.

Ofsted inspectors conducted a reinspection monitoring visit of the college in April 2010, when they judged that of the eight themes under consideration, reasonable progress was being made in seven and insufficient progress in one. These themes were linked to the college's full inspection in October 2009, when overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for students, quality of provision and leadership and management were judged satisfactory. Of the two subject areas inspected, one was judged good and one, science and mathematics, was judged inadequate. This report comprises both the reinspection of science and mathematics and the outcomes of the four monitoring visit themes.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

Subject area	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Science and mathematics	4	4

Context

Approximately 625 students study in the science and mathematics subject area, of whom 51% are female and 79% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and attend full time. They study GCSEs and GCE AS and A-level subjects in mathematics, the sciences and psychology and first and national diplomas in science.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. Too many students do not succeed, especially in AS biology, physics, mathematics, electronics and psychology, GCE A-level physics, statistics and biology, and at high grades in GCSE biology, mathematics and science. Success rates are high in GCE A-level chemistry and electronics, and on the BTEC first diploma course. The proportion of high passes in GCSE physics is high.
- Students make satisfactory or good progress compared with their prior attainment. They make very good progress in GCE A-level chemistry and electronics and in AS chemistry. The proportion of students progressing to higher education increased significantly in 2010 compared with 2009.

Report:

- The proportion of high grades achieved by students is very low. In previous years, many students joined the college with low prior attainment and staff did not implement the low course and subject entry requirements rigorously. In many lessons, students receive insufficient challenge and their rate of learning is slow.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, all students clearly enjoy the wide range of interesting learning activities and progress well. They participate in very effective use of information learning technology that aids their learning. In the less effective lessons, students are not involved in learning and are bored. Teachers talk at them excessively.
- Lesson planning is very inconsistent. In the best examples, teachers consider the needs of individual students and address equality and diversity, health and safety and Every Child Matters issues very effectively. In other cases, lesson plans are not completed at all, they do not include different activities for different students and they do not contain any references to equality and diversity.
- Students and staff benefit from very good learning environments that are well resourced. Many laboratories, subject-specialist rooms and corridors contain very useful and informative displays. Students enjoy good access to reliable information and communication technology facilities.
- Managers have improved the initial information, advice and guidance given to students. They have introduced vocational courses at intermediate and advanced levels successfully. Managers have introduced more demanding course and subject entry criteria. They implement these more rigorously to ensure that students study at the most appropriate level for their prior attainment and language skills.
- Individual learning plans and target setting are very inconsistent. The best plans have helpful targets related to an individual's needs. They motivate students to aim for higher grades. The less effective ones have very general targets applicable to all students on the same course or subject and which are often reminders of assignment deadlines.
- Students feel that their views are requested, heard and acted on wherever feasible. They inform their course representatives of their suggestions and managers take notice of their proposals. Students feel safe in college and feel free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Managers and staff have not improved students' outcomes sufficiently. Success rates are well below national averages in too many cases. Managers do not monitor the quality of lesson plans, individual learning plans, course reviews and action plans sufficiently. The college has appointed a new head of faculty.
- Course reviews and quality improvement plans are very inconsistent. In the best examples, strengths and areas for improvement are realistic and based on clear evidence. Targets are specific. In the less effective cases, reviews are too

Report:

optimistic and give insufficient importance to key areas for improvement. They are too descriptive and lack evidence. Targets lack sufficient challenge.

What does Gateway Sixth Form college need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve initial advice and guidance by subject specialists and to implement entry requirements more rigorously, so that more students have the potential to succeed and to gain higher grades.
- Improve lesson planning and teaching and learning so that all students receive enjoyable, challenging and interesting learning activities suited to their abilities.
- Improve target setting for students so that their learning plans are individualised and that each student is inspired to attain challenging aims.
- Increase the monitoring and the quality of lesson plans, individual learning plans, course reviews, quality improvement plans, target setting and self-assessment reports; so that they are realistic, objective and challenging and they genuinely drive improvements.

Report:

Additional Themes

Inspectors explored the following themes as part of this reinspection.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has the college made with its self-assessment, post inspection action plan and quality improvement planning in order to drive improvements in students' progress?

Insufficient progress

The current quality improvement plan incorporates key areas for improvement from previous inspection reports and the self-assessment report. Targets set, such as a 2% increase in success rates, are achievable but are insufficiently challenging. Actions tend to be broad and not quantified fully. In the past year, senior managers have not monitored the plans rigorously. Plans are in place to ensure a greater scrutiny by the senior leadership team in the current year. Major omissions exist. For instance, the increasing gap between White British students' success rates and others is not action planned and only one action point relates to teaching and learning. Curriculum self-assessment reports, reflecting mainly satisfactory provision, identify many strengths but few weaknesses. Judgements on teaching and learning tend to be positive and staff identify few actions to improve key aspects of the quality of provision. The curriculum self-assessments, action plans and the college's quality improvement plan have had insufficient impact on improving students' outcomes.

Outcomes for students

What progress has the college made in improving students' outcomes?

Insufficient progress

Success rates did not improve in 2009/10, compared with 2008/09. At foundation level, success rates for students aged 16 to 18 and adults declined markedly. At intermediate level, success rates remained the same as in 2008/09 for students aged 16 to 18 and continue to be below the 2008/09 national average. Success rates for adults, however, rose substantially and are slightly above the national average. At advanced level, success rates for students aged 16 to 18 did not improve, and are significantly below the 2008/09 average. Success rates for adults declined. In the last three years, success rates for AS subjects have improved marginally but are low. GCE A-level success rates have not improved and are low. The proportion of high grades achieved by students are below national averages. The difference in the success rate for White British students, the second largest ethnic group, compared with the average success rate for the college has widened in the past three years. Students receiving additional learning support are more successful than those not receiving support. Most students make satisfactory progress compared with their

Report:

prior attainment, except for students on vocational courses who make better progress than expected.

What progress has been made in sharing good practice in teaching and learning in order to secure consistently good teaching and learning in all areas of the college?**Insufficient progress**

The sharing of good practice has not yet secured good teaching and learning across the college. In the past year, managers have introduced three peer observations for staff and a well attended teaching and learning "street party" for staff to share ideas and good practice. Managers also introduced a twilight staff development programme focusing on aspects of teaching and learning, but participation was low. The college's observations of teaching and learning indicate that the proportion of good teaching and learning declined significantly in the last year and is low. The observation process is developmental and tends to focus too much on teachers' performance. Nevertheless, the evaluations are broadly accurate. Managers do not collate the outcomes of the process sufficiently at faculty or college level to inform improvement plans. Lesson plans vary considerably in quality. The teaching and learning policy contains minimum standards for lesson plans, but managers do not monitor systematically whether these standards are being met.

What progress has been made by the senior team and governors in setting and monitoring measurable targets within curriculum operational plans?**Insufficient progress**

Managers are in the very early stages of ensuring that curriculum plans are aligned with strategic targets and that they monitor them appropriately. Through a consultative process, managers have developed new corporate strategic objectives including measurable targets. They are in the process of devising an operational plan, which will include targets for faculties, courses and staff. Senior managers intend to monitor targets closely through a standing agenda item at their meetings. The current curriculum operational plans focus on a narrow range of targets and do not consider the improvement of aspects of teaching and learning sufficiently. Targets are not clearly defined and do not specify in detail what actions need to be taken to improve students' experience. Managers intend that staff performance management targets be aligned fully to meet the college's strategic objectives. The college appointed a new principal last year.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010