

Kingston College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130448

Name of lead inspector: Alan Marsh HMI

Last day of inspection: 1 October 2010

Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the college

1. Kingston College is a large general further education college occupying six sites in the centre of the outer London Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. A new principal took over in April 2010 and at the time of the inspection the college was still in the throes of a major reorganisation of its staffing and internal structures.
2. The inhabitants of Kingston are, in the main, relatively affluent and well educated, although there are wards of considerable deprivation. Management and professional occupations predominate and unemployment is low. Few secondary pupils are eligible for free school meals. The college population derives from a wide area of South and West London and comprises 50% minority ethnic students, much higher than the proportion who live in the immediate locality of Kingston. The local secondary school environment is highly competitive: all schools have sixth forms and choices for students and parents include some very high-achieving grammar and independent schools. A high proportion of students stay in formal education at age 16: under 4% of such young people are not in employment, education or training. The proportion of school leavers attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is well above the national average.
3. Provision at the college is offered in almost all subject areas. The largest subject areas are science and mathematics; leisure, travel and tourism; arts, media and publishing; preparation for life and work; and, business, administration and law. The inspection graded provision in science and mathematics; sport, travel and tourism; performing arts, media and communications; languages, literature and culture; English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD). Provision for learners on Train to Gain programmes and in apprenticeships was also inspected across the entire college.
4. The college provides training on behalf of the following:
 - British Airports Authority
 - McLaren Racing
 - London Fire Brigade
 - Mars UK
 - Nestle UK
 - Thames Water
 - Plasser Theurer
 - British Airways
 - Kingston Hospital NHS Trust
 - Defence Geographic Centre
 - Surrey County Council

- John Lewis Partnership
- Job Centre Plus
- Kingston University
- Thames Valley University
- Middlesex University
- Tube Lines
- Kingston Police
- Chessington World of Adventures.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled students in 2008/09
<p>Provision for young students: 14 to 16</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> <p>Foundation learning</p>	<p>77 part-time students</p> <p>2,807 full-time and 127 part-time students</p> <p>292 full-time students</p>
<p>Provision for adult students: Further education (aged 19 and over)</p>	<p>703 full-time and 1,198 part-time students</p>
<p>Provision for employers: Train to Gain (T2G) Apprenticeships</p>	<p>1150 trainees 228 apprentices</p>

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for students	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

Subject areas	Grade
Science and mathematics	4
Sports, recreation, travel and tourism	2
Performing arts, media and communications	3
Languages and literature	3
English for speakers of other languages	3
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

Overall effectiveness

- Kingston College is satisfactory, as is its capacity to improve. Students enjoy what they do and many choose to travel here from well beyond the local borough. The college is a very harmonious, diverse, safe community. Until last year, however, not enough students achieved their main qualifications, and the college fell well behind others in how successful its students were. This was particularly true of students aged 16 to 18, especially on some GCE A-level courses.
- Throughout 2009/10, however, and especially since the arrival of a new principal, determined efforts have been made to improve how well students do. The actions taken over the last year have been drastic and they have produced

very significant improvements to students' results. Much teaching is now more effective, although many lessons are still uninspiring and students are not made to do enough of the work. Students are no longer enrolled onto courses where they might struggle. If they do start to fall behind or do poorly in assessments, a lot of support is offered to keep them on track. Attendance and punctuality are much better. Students have noticed these significant differences in the culture of the college, and they warm to the higher expectations that teachers now have of them. Morale is also high amongst staff, who share with students a strong determination to realise some of the untapped potential of this vibrant college. To accomplish this, the way governors and managers in some departments review how well the college is doing still needs to improve considerably.

7. Keeping students safe, caring for their welfare and personal development, respecting their different backgrounds and involving them in the local community through many successful partnerships are all well-established facets of the college. Students are proud of their college and keen to play a more prominent part in how it is run.

Main findings

- Students' achievement is satisfactory. Success rates on all long courses rose significantly in 2009/10 from an unsatisfactory position to one that is one percentage point above the previous year's national average. Improvements at advanced level have been particularly notable. The success rate of GCE A-level courses, however, remains low, as does that of apprenticeships.
- Students are well prepared in many respects for the next stage of their education or employment. Rates of progression between levels of courses and between the college and higher education or employment are high. Students contribute significantly to life in the wider community and much of what they do there helps shape them positively as citizens.
- The college assures the safety and welfare of its students very well. Students feel safe and learn to take responsibility for their own well-being. Many travel long distances in order to study in a safe, friendly, culturally diverse community.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers foster good relationships with their students and use their extensive professional experience well to help students gain insights into employment practices and professional standards. Academic support and personal encouragement are freely given and appreciated by students. Students receive helpful written feedback on their work.
- Too many teachers fail to capture students' interest or sustain their attention in lessons. Learning resources are often dull and uninspiring, and do not promote active learning by students. Students' critical independent thinking is not well developed. Many students do not know what progress they have made or how they might make more because the learning targets set for them lack precision.

- The curriculum is well designed and offers a good choice of programmes, including some highly specialised courses. Students can select from a wide range of general educational options on courses from foundation to advanced levels. Opportunities for residential and field trips are plentiful and add significantly to students' enjoyment and development. However, the range of apprenticeships is narrow.
- The college's partnership working with local organisations and agencies leads to benefits for students. Collaboration is well led, and promotes clear progression routes and integrated work across various sectors. Subject areas work effectively with employers to ensure courses meet local priorities where appropriate.
- Students receive very good welfare and personal support. The student advocates and welfare team are highly effective. The information, advice and guidance students receive are impartial, broad but well focused on students' individual needs. Tutors now act incisively to identify and support students at risk of falling behind.
- Additional learning support is inadequately resourced and lacks particular expertise to support some levels of need. The support that many students receive does not demonstrably lead to their acquiring, over time, increasing autonomy and confidence in how they manage their own learning. The college does not do enough to analyse the impact of its specialist support.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new principal and his senior leadership team have brought about a change of culture from one of relative stasis and frustration to one of determination and realistic aspiration. Staff feel confident and empowered. In 2009/10 success rates for students improved significantly to a satisfactory level.
- Curricular management is still very variable: too many managers do not analyse data intelligently enough to understand how well their courses are doing; they do not set sufficiently ambitious targets for students, nor monitor the effectiveness of actions taken to improve provision.
- Governance is inadequate. Governors have been too disinclined to challenge some of the college's historical poor performance or direction. Their interrogation of both student success data and financial information has been weak. As a result, the rate of improvement in both these critical areas of operation has been too slow.
- The college's promotion of inclusion, equality and diversity is good. Students enjoy being part of such a diverse, well-integrated community. Teachers incorporate themes of social and cultural diversity well into many lessons. However, the differences between the rates at which identified groups of students succeed have been reduced more by individual teachers' innovations than by any corporate strategy.
- The self-assessment report for 2008/09 was ineffectual as a sharp tool to bring about urgent improvement, and at course level self-assessment is not yet consistently acute or insightful. Managers now monitor more effectively the progress of course teams towards achieving their identified actions, but much

of this work has still to undergo a full cycle of implementation, evaluation and review.

What does Kingston College need to do to improve further?

- Further train and enable teachers to use more varied, imaginative and active teaching strategies so that all students become more interested and involved in their lessons. Develop more nuanced questioning techniques and more stimulating teaching resources. Set more precise learning targets for students and help them evaluate their own progress towards them.
- Improve the way in which teachers and tutors enrol, teach and support GCE A-level students, develop their independent thinking and precisely monitor their progress, so that pass rates for these students continue to rise. Apply a similarly rigorous approach to apprenticeships, so that work-based learners' achievement also continues to improve.
- Ensure that all subject and curriculum managers learn how to analyse data more intelligently to inform their continuous process of evaluative review.
- Ensure that managers set ambitious, but realistic, performance targets at course and faculty level, and monitor progress towards these assiduously. Model the best practices in writing curricular self-assessment reports so that they all attain similar levels of critical insight.
- Develop the capacity, expertise and resources to ensure that students who are identified as having a particular need receive the necessary additional learning support to help them reach their potential and increase their autonomy as learners. Evaluate systematically the impact on each student of the individual learning support they have received through their course.
- Raise the level of challenge and depth of scrutiny that governors bring to the college's work. Provide them with timely access to data, curriculum updates, self-assessment reports and intelligence about the further education and skills sector so that they may play a full part in securing the college's future educational results and financial health.

Summary of the views of students as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- the experienced teachers who use their professional knowledge to relate theory to practice effectively
- additional lessons and extra help that enable them to understand difficult concepts and material
- interesting trips and visits to enrich their learning
- how much the new principal is seen around the college and how approachable he is
- receiving good advice and help with curricula vitae (CVs) and applications to university

- the way personal tutors provide care, support and understanding for particular health problems
- the approachable, friendly and supportive staff
- a relaxed and safe environment where they can be themselves
- being treated as adults
- the way the college helps them to believe in themselves and listens to what they say.

What students would like to see improved:

- the number and condition of computers available for independent work
- the way some students are allowed to congregate and smoke outside the front of the college and present a poor image to the rest of the community
- the way teachers present facts and information in some lessons
- the dilapidated state of accommodation in a few areas, and some course groups having to work in cramped classrooms
- the way mathematics is taught in mixed level groups
- the amount and timeliness of the guidance and help teachers and tutors provide on progressing into employment or higher education
- the tolerance shown by a few teachers towards bad behaviour in lessons.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the flexible approach to ensure that Train to Gain courses and apprenticeships are designed according to employers' requirements
- the good standards of students' work
- the additional support students receive from assessors
- the 'hands-on', rather than bureaucratic, approach of college staff
- the way that the college's training benefits the whole company
- the speed of response of college staff to requests for information and support.

What employers would like to see improved:

- communication to ensure that they get up-to-date information on planned changes to the qualifications as a result of implementation of the new qualifications credit framework
- the information they receive on students' progress and on revisions to their action plans for further learning.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. The college is in the middle of a well-managed reorganisation, which is successfully motivating teachers and middle managers to improve students' success rates. Senior managers, led resolutely by the new principal, have introduced highly effective practical methods to halt the decline in students' achievement. These have significantly raised achievement to a satisfactory level in 2009/10. These methods include scrupulous attention to students' prior attainment and aptitude, higher entry requirements for some courses, incisive risk assessment and monitoring of students' progress, and much more intelligent use of data to illuminate how well students are doing. Students are playing a more meaningful part in the life of their college community. Previously ineffective self-assessment is much improved, but is still too variable across subject areas in its insight and impact. The setting of targets often lacks ambition. Many of the areas identified at the last inspection as needing improvement have been successfully remedied, although most of the main inspection grades remain the same. The promotion of equality and diversity has improved significantly since the most recent monitoring visit.

Outcomes for students

Grade 3

9. Success rates on all long courses were persistently below the national average for the last three years until 2009/10, when they rose by five percentage points to be broadly in line with the previous year's national average. For students aged 16 to 18, success rates on long courses rose after three static years in 2009/10 by seven percentage points to match the previous year's national average. Students on foundation level courses succeed at a rate well above the national average, sustaining a dramatic recent improvement. At advanced level, the low success rates of 2006/07 declined further in 2008/09 but rose significantly in 2009/10 to a point that is now just below the previous year's national average. The proportions who achieve high grades remain low. The relatively small numbers of students aged 14 to 16 who attend college achieve at a satisfactory rate.
10. For the smaller number of adult students, similar stories of significant improvements in 2009/10 can be told, especially at entry and advanced level. At intermediate level, the success rate is now broadly in line with the previous year's national average.
11. The numbers of trainees completing their Train to Gain programme within the expected period of time have improved and are now satisfactory. The success rates of apprentices also rose in 2009/10, but they were previously at a very low level and remain well below the national average.
12. There are few consistent variations in attainment between different identifiable groups of students. Women make less progress than men on advanced level

courses, but this varies between subjects. The success rates of most groups of Black students are lower than those for most other ethnic groups, especially at advanced level, and the success rates for Indian and Bangladeshi students are higher. These discrepancies have reduced in the past year.

13. Students make satisfactory progress from their varied starting points. At GCE AS level they make slightly better progress than might be expected, but at GCE A level this is reversed. On advanced level vocational courses students now make the progress expected of them; in 2008/09 they were making better than expected progress.
14. Students are attracted to the college by its good reputation as a place to study and they enjoy their courses. Attendance rates have been low for some years but improved considerably in 2009/10 and are now satisfactory. Students gain in many aspects of their personal and social lives, and become well equipped to gain employment or go on to higher education. Progression rates to further study, both within and beyond the college, or to employment, are good.
15. Students feel very safe and well protected. Indeed, many travel long distances to Kingston College for this very reason. They continue to develop and practise good habits of personal safety and protection, and learn to take responsibility for their own well-being.
16. Students play an increasingly influential part in how the college is run. This work is still being developed through more formal channels. Their involvement in the wider life of the local community is already very well established. Through numerous imaginative projects and coordinated events, large numbers of students contribute with verve and generosity to the society in which they live and work. For many, these experiences are transformational.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

17. Teachers foster good relationships with their students and many have improved aspects of their lessons over the last year. The college has much improved the way most teachers begin lessons, making links with previous learning and setting out what will be taught and how. Teachers draw on their extensive industrial experience to help students gain valuable insight into employment practices and professional standards. A small minority of teachers captivate their students with highly effective questioning techniques to reinforce key points, often using humour to good effect. Students enjoy these lessons. Their understanding deepens and they come to expect more of themselves. Varied teaching methods and well planned sequential tasks keep such students interested and attentive. Equality and diversity themes are covered well in many lessons and this contributes significantly to the relaxed, inclusive atmosphere in the college. Most teachers provide their students with very good academic support and encouragement, responding promptly to requests for additional help.

18. Many of these good practices are not sufficiently widespread. Too many lessons fail to interest students or propel them into taking an active part in their learning. Dull handouts, closed questions, excessive didacticism and the ingrained practice many teachers have of answering their own questions nullify the impact of even well-planned lessons. Students' critical independent thinking remains underdeveloped. Too much paired and small group work is done perfunctorily with neither teacher nor students knowing why this approach is being taken.
19. Technology is beginning to be used more widely in lessons, although this does not of itself always lead to stimulating, interactive ways for students to learn. Students speak highly of the web-based on-line learning environment where teachers in a few subject areas have placed information such as podcasts and links to good e-resources.
20. Following assessment, teachers provide good written feedback to students. It is usually constructively critical and informative, and helps students learn. However, when teachers set targets with students in their learning plans, such as in work-based learning reviews, these are often imprecise. They are not written well enough to show what each individual student is expected to do and they do not indicate progress effectively. As a result, too many students remain unclear about how they might improve their work.
21. The college offers a good range of provision across all course levels, serving students' needs for basic skills and their ambitions for vocational training, academic advancement and employment. Specialist courses in fashion, art and design and sport attract students from a wide geographical area. The provision in GCSEs and GCE A levels is extensive and well designed. The college has been very responsive to students' requests for more flexibility in the scheduling of lessons and courses. Although the college takes into account the declared needs of employers, the range of apprenticeships remains narrow, and opportunities for employees to acquire a qualification in literacy or numeracy are limited.
22. Many students take part in a stimulating range of residential and field trips that add an important dimension to their learning experience. The college invests well in the promotion and development of enrichment activities through student advocates and sports development officers. The choice is good, as is participation.
23. College staff work well in partnership with employers, schools, and local agencies and borough councils to shape and refine the curriculum. Through these close liaisons, employers bring into the classroom a realistic view of their industry through presentations and discussions. Opportunities for work experience and volunteer placements have increased. The college provides good, tailored support and advice, for example in ESOL and study skills, which effectively encourage school pupils to continue in further education.

24. The college has developed its information, advice and guidance services well and they are used extensively by appreciative students. Sensitive and informed discussions help students plan their immediate future, but the consequent action plans are not sufficiently detailed or precise. Welfare support is particularly effective. The expertise of college staff and the skilled use of referrals to external agencies combine to provide a comprehensive support network that helps many students overcome barriers to their success. The tutorial system, in combination with the highly effective team of student advocates, also provides good personal and academic support, particularly to those students who are at risk of falling behind or leaving their course. The group tutorial provision is of mixed quality and value.
25. The college does not currently provide adequate additional learning support. Resources are stretched, specialist expertise is deficient to support some identified learning difficulties, and learning plans often fail to guide students incrementally towards relative autonomy in their learning. The impact of this complex form of support on students' achievement is not well analysed.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

26. For the three years before 2009/10, the college lagged behind similar colleges in achieving successful outcomes for its students. The action taken to tackle low success rates, particularly for students aged 16 to 18 at advanced level, was too slow and ineffectual. The college's recently appointed principal, ably supported by a leadership team given new scope to make an impact, has been rapidly successful in changing the culture of the college and motivating staff to ensure that students do better. This transformation has already borne fruit: in 2009/10 success rates improved significantly. The major restructuring of the college, still in transition at the time of inspection, is being well managed and staff morale is high. Inspectors were met with genuine enthusiasm by a workforce who welcomes the opportunities and empowerment the new structure offers. The college's revised strategic objectives are bold, but tempered with pragmatism and underpinned by sound planning. Curriculum managers now monitor and challenge emerging trends in students' performance throughout the year more stringently, although not all yet do so effectively. The college has greatly improved the availability and timely accuracy of data for curriculum managers' benefit, but again not all know how to make the best use of what they are given. In too many subject areas, managers do not set sufficiently ambitious targets for improving success rates.
27. Governance is inadequate. Governors use their expertise well to support the college but have not adequately challenged some of its poor performance or lack of direction. This has further exacerbated the slow rate of improvement to students' success rates. Despite the governors' regular monitoring of finances, the college has operated at an unsustainable deficit for the last two years. Governors did not recognise nor respond to the financial crisis early enough.
28. The college assures the safety and welfare of its students very well. All statutory duties are meticulously discharged. Key staff work in close

collaboration with many local welfare and support agencies to minimise risk, both on the college premises and in all other locations which students might visit. In addition, the college has developed its own staff training and testing programme, to ensure that all employees understand how they might identify and respond to signs of possible harm, hazard or abuse. There is a declining occurrence of injury and recorded incidents. Students learn over time to take responsibility for their own well-being and safe keeping, receiving pertinent advice on a number of different types of domestic and civil jeopardy that they might encounter. These are well researched in light of the social and cultural composition of the student population, ranging across such issues as forced marriage and gang behaviour. As a result, students feel very secure and particularly well prepared to look after themselves.

29. The college promotes inclusion, equality and diversity effectively. Students participate in some well-considered and highly effective events that raise their awareness and empathy with other cultures. Students enjoy being part of a very diverse, harmonious community where bullying and harassment are not tolerated. Teachers in many subject areas promote equality and diversity well in lessons. Senior managers deal with complaints and incidents effectively. The college's equality committee has met too infrequently of late. As a result, the members have not yet reviewed the college's single equality scheme or the progress made towards achieving identified actions. Strategies to improve the performance of some under-achieving groups of students are not yet making sufficient direct impact; where success rates have improved for some particular groups, thus narrowing the gap between their achievement and that of the majority, this is attributable to innovative work by individual teachers.
30. Students have a good range of mechanisms for expressing their views to managers. They are confident that managers listen to their opinions and take action where this is practical. Many aspects of college life, including facilities, enrolment, teaching and timetables, have been improved as a result of student feedback. The college is expanding the student group representative system this year to ensure a wider membership and the fuller engagement of all. Managers make effective use of the results of student questionnaires to gauge the effectiveness of different initiatives, comparing trends in different faculties. Employers' views are regularly sought and used productively to develop courses, training and assessment.
31. The college's self-assessment process in 2008/09 failed to make accurate evaluative judgements and lacked critical insight. Leaders and managers underestimated the seriousness of the inadequate success rates at that time. They have made significant improvements to this year's process for 2009/10. There are still too many variations in the incisiveness of curriculum area self-assessment reports. A few managers are still not able to analyse systematically any trends in multiple data about students. They do not understand what is wrong so cannot act to put it right. Senior managers, however, have brought increased rigour and resolution to the monitoring of course teams' progress with their improvement plans, and the impact of this new approach is apparent.

Work-based learning managers effectively assure the quality of the work of their subcontractors.

32. Senior managers are increasingly improving the scrutiny of teaching and learning. Although observers of lessons identify areas for improvement and now set more specific actions to expedite this, not all managers capture the outcome of these actions. The college acknowledges that managers' ability to appraise pedagogy astutely varies too much. As a result, some teachers still do not know how to modify their practice and their teaching remains vapid and unengaging. Where teachers have received practical help from subject learning coaches and mentors, their teaching has demonstrably improved.
33. Financial management is satisfactory and the college's restructuring plans place it in a better situation to provide value for money. Staff development is good, and managers have re-focused this to raise standards in teaching and learning. Accommodation is improved as resources allow, although a number of rooms are cramped or shabby.

Subject areas

Science and mathematics

Grade 4

Context

34. Currently there are 450 students enrolled on intermediate mathematics courses, mainly GCSE mathematics and functional skills. The majority of these are students aged 16 to 18. Over 160 students study GCE AS- and A- level mathematics courses, and about 130 students take GCE AS- or A- level biology, chemistry or physics. There is a smaller vocational science provision, with some 90 students following first diploma, national certificate and national diploma courses in applied science.

Key findings

- Pass rates on GCE AS-level courses are very low. Only around half the students who complete courses in GCE AS-level mathematics or chemistry attain the qualification. Pass rates in GCE AS-level biology have improved but remain significantly below the previous year's national average. Students who do pass do so with grades that match the predictions made for them on the basis of their prior attainment.
- The number of students on intermediate courses who complete their studies is above the national average on most courses. The proportion of these students who pass their GCSE examinations at grades A* to C is satisfactory and shows an improving trend.
- Teaching at AS level is often dull and uninspiring, focusing on narrow technique to the exclusion of a wider conceptual understanding or the capacity to solve problems. Lesson planning does not adequately take into account the full ability range of students. Many teachers do not have high enough expectations of their students, and too many students remain idle or unchallenged in lessons.
- In the best lessons, teachers use group work activities to enliven learning. Here, students become actively involved in ways that stimulate and provoke them to question, explore and think for themselves.
- The curriculum provision is broad and enables students to progress on to a number of different pathways according to their personal interests and aptitudes. There are useful links with Kingston University which enhance learning on vocational courses and provide further opportunities for progression.
- Classroom accommodation is poor and often provides a dispiriting learning environment. The size and configuration of many rooms impede active learning. Interactive whiteboards are used well to promote and enhance learning, but these only exist in two rooms. Laboratories are old but adequate; specialist equipment is satisfactory.

- Teachers do not set students enough independent work to complete outside lessons in GCE AS-level mathematics, nor do they impel students sufficiently to complete it to required standards. The policy of one homework assignment per week is not adhered to. Significant numbers of students do not complete their homework and this hinders their progress.
- On vocational courses, reviews of students' progress and the setting of learning targets are useful and timely activities, successfully promoting achievement. However, on GCE A-level courses target setting is anodyne and insufficiently specific to help students improve their academic progress or reach their full potential.
- Teachers and tutors do not give effective and timely academic support to prevent underperforming students from drifting into failure. Interventions from subject area managers lack urgency and coherence. The subsequent progress of such students is not well monitored, and agreed actions are not always executed.
- Pastoral support for students is good, underpinned by caring personal tutors, and encourages and enables students to complete their courses. Tutorial resources are interesting, well produced and relevant to students' wider needs.
- Actions taken so far have failed to improve adequately the quality of GCE A-level provision. Managers and teachers have lacked vigour and focus. The use of data to inform priorities for development has been unsatisfactory. Lesson observations have not been used effectively to bring about secure improvements in teaching and learning. There have, however, been some successful measures taken to improve achievement in science.

What does Kingston College need to do to improve further?

- Intervene in incisive and timely ways so that that students who are at risk of underperforming are helped to reach the required standards.
- Prioritise the development of teaching techniques to meet the needs of mixed ability classes. Develop coaching models to support teachers in implementing new methods.
- Improve the analysis of student achievement data and the resultant target setting in order to inform improvement planning. Ensure that the professional development of teachers focuses on areas for improvement identified by lesson observations, student feedback and the analysis of performance data.
- Implement a robust and consistent homework policy which sets clearer expectations of students' independent work in order to support their work in lessons. Make sure that students complete their homework.
- Develop further ways of talking regularly with students as a means of reflecting critically on their experience of learning in order to improve it for them.
- Create more stimulating and engaging classroom accommodation through refurbishment, displays of students' work and appropriate configuration of furniture.

Sport, recreation, travel and tourism

Grade 2

Context

35. Currently there are 440 full-time students following courses in sport, recreation, travel and tourism from foundation to advanced level. Of these, 65% are male and just under half are White British. Some 134 students are enrolled in one of the specialist sports academies.

Key findings

- Students achieve high success rates on the first diploma and on all foundation courses in sport, travel and tourism. However, over the last three years too few students on the national diploma in sport have completed their course; and in 2009/10 too few students were retained on the national certificate in travel and tourism.
- Students demonstrate good practical sports skills and work safely, and to good purpose, in practical lessons. They enjoy their work and are very successful in local, regional and national sports competitions. Students feel safe and well supported in a caring, inclusive environment.
- Sports students develop very good coaching and instructing skills, knowledge and understanding. They lead coaching and activity sessions with confidence and authority. These skills are employed successfully in local schools, clubs and voluntary groups. Students acquire what they need to gain employment in sports industries.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations of what students might accomplish. Teachers use their current industrial expertise to prepare students very well for employment in the sports, leisure and travel and tourism sectors. In particular, the sports academies hone students' specialist technical skills to a high level. In some theory lessons, however, more able students are not given enough opportunities to extend their learning further.
- Good sports facilities enable students across the whole college to enjoy a wide range of sporting and recreational activities, and students participate in good numbers.
- There is good support for learning. Students who have been correctly identified during their initial assessment as requiring particular forms of support receive what they need and consequently thrive. Regular personal support sessions and additional workshops ensure that the students make good progress.
- An outstanding range of partnerships and vocational links provide excellent prospects for students wishing to enter the sports, travel and tourism industries. Progression into employment and higher education is very good: in 2009/10 65% of students progressed into higher education and 30% of sports students gained relevant employment.

- Leadership and management are good. Most course teams improve standards through the regular, systematic tracking of students' attainment, progress and attendance. Equality and diversity are promoted positively through sporting role models and student ambassadors. Leaders promote high standards and expectations from all staff and students.
- Self-assessment is not yet sufficiently self critical at course or school level to expedite further timely improvements. Not all course teams analyse or use data as intelligently as they might.

What does Kingston College need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention rates on advanced level courses by reviewing curriculum design, and by continuing to monitor and support students more precisely during the first year of a two-year programme.
- Ensure that all lessons incorporate appropriate extension activities to provide more challenge to able students in theory lessons. Develop the targeted use of group work to stretch these students further. Use peer and self-assessment more often to develop analytical skills.
- Sharpen the self-assessment of all course teams to improve their capacity to identify their relative weaknesses. Use data about students more intelligently to develop rigorous improvement plans in order to improve further the standard of students' work.

Performing arts, media and communications

Grade 3

Context

36. Currently there are 653 students enrolled on courses in media and film studies, music and music technology, and performing arts, acting, dance and musical theatre at intermediate and advanced levels. Most students study at advanced level. The large majority of students are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory and have improved significantly in 2009/10. Success rates are high on full-time intermediate music and media courses. Despite recent improvements, success rates remain low on some advanced courses as a result of too few students completing their courses.
- Students develop a good range of vocationally-specific practical and technical skills, and a realistic understanding of industry practice. Most students who complete their courses make good progress and many successfully move on to further study. A small minority of students progress directly into employment or work placements in the creative industries.
- Students value teachers' particularly good subject knowledge. Lessons are most successful when theory and content are directly linked to students' interests and to current industrial practice. Most teachers use their specialist expertise well to plan stimulating project work. In the best lessons, teachers structure and consolidate learning in ways that enable students to assume a degree of autonomy in their learning.
- In many lessons, planned activities take insufficient account of some students' extensive prior knowledge and abilities. In these lessons, too many able students are not sufficiently stimulated by the pace of the lesson or by the tasks set. Moreover, teachers do too much of the work for these students, leaving them with few opportunities to think for themselves or pursue their own creative ideas.
- Students with limited prior knowledge or experience have too few opportunities to develop their critical thinking and independent learning skills, and many of these students do not use specialist language properly. Consequently, they often lack confidence in communicating their ideas, or cannot relate new concepts to what they already know and understand. A few are placed on courses that are too advanced for them.
- Assessment is fair and reliable. However, students receive insufficient feedback on their assessed work, their progress and what they need to do to improve, particularly on performing arts courses. Grammatical errors in written work are not always corrected and students lack direct guidance on how best to take notes in class.
- Productive partnerships with higher education institutions enhance progression opportunities for students. Informal links with the creative industries enrich the

curriculum, providing plentiful opportunities for students to experience the demands of work-related activities. Some students obtain prestigious work experience opportunities as a direct result of teachers' contacts within the industries.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. Internal communications are good. Managers and teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to improve their provision and high levels of confidence in the college's new senior leadership team. Recent interventions to improve the outcomes from poorly performing courses have had beneficial impact in most cases.
- Managers have brought about a better degree of local accountability for raising students' achievement. The monitoring of students at risk of failing is now effective for most courses. In 2009/10, many courses improved their success rates significantly. However, the success rates on a few courses have declined recently. The nature and standard of students' experience are too variable.
- Self-assessment within and across the subject area is insufficiently critical or insightful. Managers do not use timely data to track the impact of their actions and so improvements remain inconsistent and unpredictable. The analysis and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning are weak.
- Students work in an atmosphere of respect and harmony. Teachers promote cultural diversity well in the classroom and in college life. However, women achieve less well than men, and this discrepancy has not improved over the last three years to 2009/10.

What does Kingston College need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' chances of success on poorly performing advanced level courses by ensuring that their prior knowledge and aptitude are taken fully into account and that students are placed on the most appropriate course. Reinforce to them the high level of commitment required to succeed.
- Enliven and differentiate teaching and learning to ensure that individual students are challenged to work productively, take responsibility for their own learning and think for themselves. Refine activities in order to build more directly on their own interests, prior knowledge and ability, so developing their confidence to pursue their creative ideas on the firm foundation of core technical skills.
- Improve the frequency and critical narrative of verbal and written feedback to students on their work, ensuring that they understand what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further. Teach them to take better notes in lessons and throughout practical activities.
- Sharpen self-assessment and consequent action planning across the subject area, including a more intelligent use of data, by monitoring students' progress more effectively at course and subject level. Analyse the achievement of different groups, in particular women, on advanced level courses and take action designed to ensure that all students fulfil their potential.

Languages, literature and culture

Grade 3

Context

37. Currently 552 students are following courses in GCSE and GCE English language and literature. Some 218 students are studying at advanced level, while 334 take GCSE English. The vast majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and study full time. Courses in modern foreign languages are no longer recruiting new students because the demand for them has declined.

Key findings

- The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in GCSE English was well above the national average between 2007 and 2009 but declined in 2009/10 to a level broadly in line with the national average.
- Students develop good skills in language, literature, literacy and studying. They improve their confidence well in public speaking and improve their social behaviour. They participate well in debates, exchange ideas with enthusiasm and present opinions clearly and with confidence. Students work very collaboratively and enjoy helping each other. They demonstrate a good understanding of terminology and develop effective analytical skills.
- Students progress well from one course level to the next and most achieve at or above their target grades. However, attendance is poor across all courses: students missed one lesson in five in 2009/10. Punctuality has improved and is now good. Following recent actions across the college, expectations of punctuality are clear to all and lateness is challenged strongly by teachers.
- Students feel very safe and have a good understanding of the code of conduct governing behaviour. They are aware of processes for complaints and find their teachers very approachable. They derive clear benefit and pleasure from working together in a diverse community that draws on a wide range of cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.
- Teachers have good subject expertise and know the needs of their students well. They manage lessons effectively and plan carefully to make sure that all students participate actively. Lessons are varied and stimulating. Despite students' lively engagement, many teachers talk too much and tend to answer their own questions too often, or recast the answers given by students.
- Teachers give effective verbal and written feedback. They praise and encourage students, who work well and collaboratively as a result. In the best lessons, learning technology is used well to enhance or extend activities. It is not, however, always accessible in classrooms for more able students to undertake extension work.
- Students receive good support both in and out of the classroom to help them improve their study and independent learning skills. They learn to take responsibility for their own work and to respect the work of others. Students

particularly value the 'buddy' system that facilitates very effective support from their peers, both for course work and in preparation for examinations.

- The college provides a good range of English courses with clear progression routes. Enrichment activities are well planned and include an interesting range of visiting speakers from the wider social and educational communities.
- Managers have high expectations and course teams have a clear sense of their responsibility for the performance of students on their course. Staff morale is good. Managers have effectively improved the quality of teaching and learning, which is now more active with formative assessment at its heart. Much good collaborative work takes place between teachers, who share their best practices effectively.

What does Kingston College need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance on all courses so that students maximise their opportunities to learn and achieve.
- Continue to identify students at risk of not making the progress expected of them or of leaving the course early, and provide support in order to improve GCE AS- and A-level success rates.
- Continue to develop in teachers techniques for reducing their tendency to talk too much and for enabling students to articulate their own answers and comments in lessons.
- Review the extent to which some students' limited access to learning technology might be hindering the development of their independent learning.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

Grade 3

Context

38. Currently 276 adult students attend a range of ESOL courses, including skills for work and citizenship classes. Some 74 students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on the full-time foundation curriculum, 26 of whom are also taking GCSE mathematics, and 21 functional skills in information and communication technology. The provision is based entirely on the main site.

Key findings

- Achievement is satisfactory. Younger students on the foundation curriculum succeed well. However, the proportion of adults who attain their qualifications is unsatisfactory, partly because a minority do not present themselves for examination. The success rate is particularly low for those whose course involves reading and writing in addition to speaking and listening. Attainment of the skills for work qualifications has improved substantially.
- The majority of students following the foundation curriculum progress to further ESOL or other vocational courses at intermediate or advanced levels. Progression for adults is mainly within the ESOL subject area. However, an increased focus is now being put on the acquisition of reading and writing skills and associated qualifications in order to support progression to other vocational areas and to employment.
- Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. In 2009/10, following some adaptations of the timetable to suit students' personal circumstances, attendance improved by six percentage points to 87%. Lessons in the wider vocational curriculum, however, which do not focus primarily on language acquisition, are less well attended and less well enjoyed by students than those taught by ESOL specialists.
- Students feel very welcome and safe in the college, and they are highly enthusiastic about the positive impact of their learning experiences on their social well-being. They feel listened to and that they have a part to play in the development of their learning. Their views are gathered systematically and the college acts on what they say where applicable.
- Teaching and learning are good in classes taught by ESOL specialists. Detailed planning, linked to accurate diagnosis of students' learning needs, ensure that students with a wide range of abilities make good progress. In wider vocational lessons, however, the acquisition and application of subject-specific vocabulary are not given sufficient prominence, and teachers do not do enough to help students learn English.
- Students make significant progress in lessons to improve their speaking and listening, thus contributing to their social confidence and integration. Standards of work are high. Students' work is marked carefully and clearly, indicating errors and offering corrections in grammar, vocabulary and punctuation.

- The breadth of provision is satisfactory. In addition to the foundation curriculum, which includes personal and social development and citizenship, students aged 16 to 18 can also take GCSEs. The curriculum offer for adults is narrower, with little provision in the evenings other than citizenship and skills for work. The college has recently introduced further vocational courses in child care and hairdressing.
- Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers use paper-based card games and live internet sites to engage students. Many rooms are crowded, particularly in lessons for younger students, and this limits group work. Students have insufficient access to interactive whiteboards. This hinders the further development of their autonomous research and higher-level skills in reading and writing.
- Students strongly value the good support and help they receive. Following thorough early diagnostic assessment, tutorials set accurate and specific learning targets for reading and writing. Teachers make good use of classroom assistants to cater for the different learning needs of individual students. Tutors and teachers know which students are looked after children, and monitor their progress carefully.
- The provision for students aged 16 to 18 is well led. Staff are proud of their students' success and keen to share their better practices. The provision for adults has been managed separately until now, and less effectively. Both areas are about to be brought together under one manager and data are already being used intelligently to investigate outcomes for all students.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. In the best lessons students' diverse cultural backgrounds are well used to enhance learning, but this practice is not as widespread as might be expected for this subject area. Significant differences in success rates exist for the two different age groups, but not for students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Self-assessment has improved and is now rigorous, accurately identifying most aspects in need of improvement. There is a sharp focus on the need to improve outcomes for students. Staff development, directed at improving teaching, is making an impact, but not all areas for development identified in lesson observations lead to explicit plans for action.

What does Kingston College need to do to improve further?

- Continue to monitor adult students' individual learning targets and progress rigorously, and support and persuade more of them to present themselves for examination, in order to improve success rates for adults.
- Disseminate good practice in teaching, learning and assessment from the provision for younger students to adult courses. Ensure that all staff use sharply-focused learning targets to help their students succeed.
- Ensure non-specialist staff teaching wider vocational subjects to ESOL students are trained and supported to improve students' acquisition of language skills.

- Make sure the curriculum offer for adult students provides the vocational skills that many may need for employment locally. Extend partnerships with employers and community groups to ensure that the educational provision is serving the needs of students both socially and economically.
- Improve access to interactive learning resources for students in order to encourage their autonomy in reading and writing and in personal research.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD)

Grade 2

Context

39. Currently 25 full-time and 67 part-time adult students and 11 full-time students aged 16 to 18 attend the specialist provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Courses are offered at foundation level at the North Kingston site, the main college site and at seven outreach centres in and around the borough.

Key findings

- Almost all students who start complete their course, and all those who complete attain their learning goals. Students develop good speaking and listening skills and gain considerably in personal and social confidence. For example, one student for whom speaking in a group was previously too stressful is now able to make useful contributions to the whole class.
- Students enjoy their learning and enthuse about the practical subjects in which they are involved. Students are able to follow instructions, take direction and understand their role within a team. Working in a café at one centre, students acquire useful employment skills. They develop their sense of being connected to the society around them as a result of the service they are providing.
- Students feel safe and secure at all the sites they attend, including some where they attend in the evening. In their practical classes they are able to adopt safe working habits and they make good progress in learning to travel safely and independently.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lesson planning is detailed, with a variety of tasks well designed to stimulate and engage students. Students' individual starting points are clearly established and are used effectively to set personal learning targets and plan interesting activities. Structured support is lacking in practical subjects for students who experience language, literacy and numeracy difficulties.
- In too many lessons there is insufficient individual learning technology to ensure a wide range of interactive learning opportunities, or to overcome sensory barriers to direct learning. For example, in one lesson a student with visual impairment struggled to read text on a whiteboard because the teacher lacked the technical tools to enhance it for him.
- The college works well with many other agencies. Managers have worked hard to establish productive links with other statutory and voluntary organisations so that students with profound and multiple disabilities may participate in courses across the borough. These links have been further exploited to extend the comprehensive range of practical and vocational courses on offer.
- Support for students is satisfactory. Learning support assistants and other additional adults are deployed effectively in lessons to support learning. Students receive regular and helpful practical advice and guidance during the

course and many students have been assisted to progress into paid or voluntary work at the end of their course.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers show energy and enthusiasm in promoting the work of the department and in ensuring provision reaches as wide a community as possible. There is a strong emphasis on enabling students to gain vocational and employability skills. Communications are good and sense of close teamwork evident. Peer observation is well used to share good practice within the department.
- Self-assessment is not sufficiently critical or analytical, and the final report is too descriptive rather than evaluative. Immediate plans to improve the provision are sensible and pragmatic, but the longer-term strategy for the department is not well developed.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff have worked hard to recruit students with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities. Wider aspects of equality and diversity are not, however, actively promoted during lessons other than during the induction period.
- Current mechanisms for listening to what students have to say and involving them in the improvement of the provision are not fully effective. Staff value those contributions that students do make but as yet many students struggle to find ways of expressing their individuality within the wider college setting.

What does Kingston College need to do to improve further?

- Identify precisely the language, literacy and numeracy needs of students in practical lessons so that these are effectively addressed in other lessons, and the learning is subsequently reinforced by targeted support.
- Review the availability and deployment of learning technology resources to ensure that teachers provide a broader range of active learning methods and that students are able to interact more fully with the curriculum.
- Develop more effective ways of enabling students to express and advance their opinions, so that they are able to play a more meaningful role in improving their own department and the college community as a whole.
- Become more acutely self-critical and evaluative when reflecting upon the nature and impact of the work of the team, to inform more effective professional dialogue and strategic planning.

Information about the inspection

40. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by one of the college's assistant principals, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment reports and development plans, comments from the local Young People's Learning Agency, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspections, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
41. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed lessons, assessments and progress reviews. They talked informally with a wide selection of students and staff. They scrutinised many documents presented by the college.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Kingston College

Learning types: 14–16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; IF provision **16–18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14–16	16–18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled students					
Full-time students	3,802		3,099	703	
Part-time students	3,685	77	127	1,198	1,378
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3	3
How well do students achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do students attain their learning goals?	3				
How well do students progress?	3				
How well do students improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3				
How safe do students feel?	2				
Are students able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?	3				
How well do students make a positive contribution to the community?	2				
Quality of provision	3	3	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for students?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support students receive in helping them to achieve?	3				
Leadership and management	3	3	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?	4				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of students?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow achievement gaps?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for students?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3				

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