

Kingston College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130448

Name of lead inspector: Janet Mercer HMI

Last day of inspection: 5 May 2011

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Kingston Hall Road
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 2AQ

Telephone number: 0208 5462151

REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Kingston College is a large general further education college, occupying six sites in the centre of the London Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. Students come from a wide area of South and West London, with a much higher proportion of students from minority ethnic heritage than that seen in the immediate locality. All local schools have sixth forms and the area has some very high-achieving grammar schools and independent schools. The proportion of school leavers attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE is well above average, although average point scores for students joining the college are often below national averages. The college offers courses in most subject areas, the largest being science and mathematics; leisure, travel and tourism; arts and media; preparation for life and work; and, business, administration and law.

The college was last inspected in September 2010. Overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for students, quality of provision, leadership and management and equality and diversity were all judged satisfactory and safeguarding was judged good. Of the six curriculum areas inspected, two were judged good, three satisfactory, but science and mathematics provision was judged inadequate.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How well has the college trained and supported curriculum managers to use performance data more effectively in rigorously evaluating the quality of provision and in setting and monitoring progress towards ambitious, realistic performance targets?

Significant progress

The college's comprehensive revision of its quality assurance systems has led to significant improvements in the quality and rigour of curriculum-level self-assessments, many of which were judged insufficiently evaluative at the last inspection. A recently appointed performance data manager has been instrumental in improving the reliability and accessibility of performance data to managers. Curriculum managers at all levels have received training in accessing and interpreting data and are increasingly confident in its use to monitor and evaluate performance at course, school and faculty level. Managers are responding positively to increased levels of responsibility and accountability.

Course and school level self-assessment reports now make good use of data to identify good and weaker performance, leading to clear actions for improvement. Teams review quality improvement plans regularly to ensure progress is being made. The college is setting ambitious targets to secure and accelerate improvement. Senior managers have introduced termly monitoring where all courses are reviewed so that areas of concern and actions for improvement are identified more quickly.

Senior and middle managers have a very realistic and accurate view of current progress and those areas requiring further action.

The college has increased the rigour of its lesson observation system and most records sampled provided a good level of detail to support the overall judgments and grades awarded. Observers provide clear feedback to teachers on relative strengths and areas for improvement and often make useful and practical recommendations on how teachers could improve their practice. The director responsible for quality improvement, training and data is currently revising the lesson observation proforma to facilitate better internal moderation judgements and improved analysis of findings across different curriculum areas in order to evaluate more fully the impact of improvement strategies.

Outcomes for learners

To what extent is the college building on improvements in students' outcomes evident in 2009/10 to increase success rates further? **Reasonable progress**

Success rates increased in 2009/10 to be broadly in line with national averages. At the time of this monitoring visit, little further data were available on students' success rates, except on a relatively small number of courses already completed. Success rates on these courses are in line with the college's increased target of 83% for 2010/11. Results in AS- and A-level modular examinations taken in January 2011 show that the college has maintained the overall achievement levels noted in 2009/10, and in some areas achieved small increases in pass rates and in the proportion of students achieving higher grades.

College data suggest that in-year retention rates are around two percentage points higher than at a similar time last year. Whilst improvements are evident in most subject areas, it is too early to determine the full impact on overall success rates. In 2009/10 the college identified that Black African and Black Caribbean students achieved less well than the college rate and similar groups nationally. In-year retention rates for these students are higher than at a similar time last year. Managers are very aware that there is still too much variation in quality of outcomes between different curriculum areas. Improving success rates in those areas where they remained below average in 2009/10 remains a key priority.

Quality of provision

How much progress has the college made in improving the quality of provision and outcomes for students in science and mathematics, judged inadequate at the last inspection? **Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, the college has introduced new leadership, restructured the provision, increased the rigour of lesson observations and strengthened performance management in science and mathematics. Considerable emphasis has been given to professional development and support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including recently appointed learning coaches, and two external consultants

providing effective professional development, support and constructive feedback to teachers.

Students speak positively about improvements in many lessons, including the use of a greater variety of activities and more rigorous monitoring of their progress. However, a few students comment that, in a small number of cases, lessons are still uninspiring and their progress is not reviewed regularly. In lessons observed during the visit, while checking of students' understanding took place, it did not always test or help develop students' deeper conceptual understanding. Although work for completion outside lessons is now set and marked more regularly, not all teachers provide sufficiently detailed feedback on how to improve.

Managers use performance data well in a critical and evaluative self-assessment process. They have improved the quality of accommodation and the display of relevant resources and students' work helps create a more stimulating learning environment. Although college data indicate that retention has improved compared with the same period in the previous year, achievements in mid-year examinations vary between subjects. It is too early to see the full impact of improvement strategies on students' achievement.

To what extent has the college provided further training and support for teachers to develop more varied, imaginative and active teaching strategies and set more precise learning targets for students? Reasonable progress

The college has invested significantly in a well-focused programme of staff training and development to improve teaching and learning across the college. The appointment of a group of learning coaches is beginning to have a demonstrable impact in raising teachers' awareness of more varied and imaginative teaching strategies, through taster sessions for all staff and specific support to individual teachers following internal lesson observations. Learning coaches are encouraging teachers to be more creative and experimental through the 'supported experiment' groups, where staff work together trying out new ideas, techniques and strategies, evaluate their success and suggest further improvements.

Students interviewed during the visit noted improvements in teaching, including more opportunities for group work, student presentations and peer learning in their lessons. The proportion of good or better lessons, as judged by the college's internal lesson observations, has increased substantially from 55% in 2008/09 to 70% in 2010/11. Managers acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure these more varied approaches are embedded fully across the college and are increasing the target for good or better lessons to 75% for the next academic year.

Tutors are increasingly encouraging students to set specific and measurable targets to improve their work, for example through the use of 'motivational dialogue' sheets. However, students interviewed during the visit reported wide variations in the frequency and rigour with which targets are reviewed, with examples of some very good practice on some courses, but with infrequent one-to-one reviews and insufficient focus on achieving higher grades on others.

How well has the college improved the capacity, expertise and resources to support those students identified with a particular learning support need?**Significant progress**

Since the last inspection, the college has devised a thorough strategy to improve the quality of learning support by comprehensively restructuring the provision. The strategy enables learning support assistants (LSAs) to work fully within individual faculties whilst specialist support staff maintain a cross-college function. Where learning support assistants have already been integrated into specific subject areas, they have been able to provide more focused and curriculum-based support, which has benefited students. The strategy includes the appointment of seven additional staff, of whom three are already in post.

Learning support staff at all levels are receiving extensive training, enhancing their ability to work with students with specific needs, such as dyslexia or autism. The college monitors the performance of learning support assistants through direct observation of their work and identifies areas for development and further training as appropriate. The learning support team has developed informative resources which help teaching staff to understand better how to support their students with specific learning needs. The recently appointed senior administrator is developing robust systems to monitor effectively students' learning needs and intervention and the tracking of students' progress and success following support. Students interviewed during the visit commented very positively on how the improved learning support service and increased availability of resources have helped them develop their independent learning skills and make better progress.

Leadership and management**How much progress has been made in ensuring that governors receive timely reports, including performance data, curriculum updates and self-assessment reports, to enable them to provide appropriate levels of scrutiny and challenge on all aspects of the college's work?****Reasonable progress**

The college has improved the quality and timeliness of information provided to governors, particularly on student performance data, so that governors are now better informed on key aspects of college performance. Governors report that training on interpreting data, combined with improved presentation of information, has strengthened their understanding and enabled them to ask more searching, challenging questions about college performance. They also appreciate how senior managers are very receptive to this higher level of scrutiny and engage in open and constructive debate.

Training on finance and equality and diversity has extended governors' understanding both of key issues and their specific responsibilities. In addition, governors value the informal contributions from college managers during corporation meetings, which provide valuable training on, for example, self-assessment processes and curriculum updates. The restructuring of corporation sub-committees

had also clarified key responsibilities and enabled governors to monitor key aspects of quality and standards and college finances more thoroughly and regularly.

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 assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document 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.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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 2011