

Gateway Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates		25 - 28 September 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-Grade 3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-Grade 3
Outcomes for students		Requires improvement-Grade 3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-Grade 3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-Grade 3

Summary of key findings for students

This provider requires improvement because:

- Students' achievement is not good because too few students make better than expected progress. Attainment in GCE AS-level qualifications is too low and progress in some subjects is often slow.
- The quality of teaching varies too much; teachers' expectations of students are not high enough and assessment is not used consistently to support learning.
- Performance management of teachers is underdeveloped and has not ensured consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Self-assessment of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is insufficient and associated action points lack a sharp focus on the most important areas for improvement.

This provider has the following strengths:

- An inclusive, welcoming and harmonious atmosphere throughout the college.
- Very good support for students, particularly vulnerable students or those with special educational needs.
- A safe learning environment with very good learning resources that are used well.
- High staying on rates, good attendance and high progression rates between levels of study.
- Widespread and productive use of students' views to inform actions for improvement.
- Students, parents and carers are highly satisfied with the college's provision.

Published date	02 November 2012
Inspection Number	404167
URN:	130755

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that managers and teachers monitor students' progress on AS level courses closely. In particular, for courses where there is a history of underperformance, managers at all levels should reinforce the importance of monitoring of assessment records and progress compared to predicted grades regularly.
- Raise teachers' expectations of students' potential for achievement. Support teachers to set students challenging targets, relative to their ability, in all learning activities and to be more demanding in ensuring students use these as their goals.
- Develop and strengthen teachers' use of assessment during learning activities to enable them to make more frequent and more effective checks on students' progress in learning and to ensure that students fully understand the main learning points.
- Support teachers to extend the range of teaching strategies they use and to match these carefully to the needs of different student groups. Support teachers to develop their skills in evaluating the success of their strategies in ensuring that learning is deepened and consolidated for all groups of students.
- Help teachers to increase their focus on subject learning beyond meeting minimum syllabus requirements by ensuring that they set clear learning objectives that cover the breadth and depth of learning in each topic or subject.
- Implement fully the revised arrangements for performance management. Ensure that managers evaluate the range of performance data available, including outcomes of lesson observations and success rates including for higher grades as well as the link to strategic objectives, to inform the performance management of all staff. Ensure that the resulting performance objectives set are demanding and measurable.
- Evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment fully through self-assessment, taking full account of the range of learning activities that take place to support students. Ensure that analysis identifies and evaluates the factors that contribute to the quality of learning fully and use these to inform detailed actions for improvement.
- Put in place systems to share good practice across teaching teams, including in the promotion of equality and diversity matters.
- Ensure that the governing body receives training in equality and diversity as a matter of urgency. Make sure that governors review annually a detailed report on equality and diversity related to recruitment and staffing matters. Ensure actions to close achievement gaps are monitored closely

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Success rates have increased markedly over the last three years from a low base. At advanced level, most students complete and pass GCE A-level qualifications and have above average success rates on small-sized vocational qualifications. The growing numbers of students studying at foundation level have high success rates.
- Most students make expected progress compared to their often below average starting points towards attaining their learning goals over the full course of their study. Progress made by the small minority of more able students and students on some GCE AS-level courses is often slow. In a few subjects, students' rate of progress is much stronger and they achieve well. For example, achievement is good across most arts subjects.
- In most subjects, students' standard of work meets qualification aim requirements but their learning is rarely extended beyond syllabus requirements. Their attendance is good, their punctuality is satisfactory and most are diligent in their work. Only a very small minority of

students withdraw from their courses.

- Students' success rates at GCE AS-level are low overall with wide variation across subjects; progression from AS to A level study is also low. Students' success in vocational courses at intermediate level is average. Across all qualification aims, students' achievement of high grades, including GCSE grades at A* to C in English and mathematics, is below average and has not increased over time.
- The small numbers of adult students achieve very well; almost all are successful at foundation and intermediate level. The high numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve at a higher rate than their peers.
- The wide gap that exists between the lower achievements of White British students compared to their peers is beginning to close. Gaps in achievement exist between several other smaller minority ethnic groups and the college's average success rate, which have not yet begun to close. The difference between men's and women's achievement is small.
- Students make good use of the opportunities to develop their personal and social skills through roles such as ambassadors, council members and their involvement in artistic performances and other college events such as the fashion show. Through productive links with employers, students make good use of the chance to gain valuable experience of employment, for example through internships with businesses and work experience with local companies.
- Most students take additional qualifications in wider key skills such as working with others or problem solving and the large majority are successful. The achievement of the smaller number of students who take functional skills qualifications, mainly as part of foundation level programmes, is average.
- The progression rate between levels of study is high; more than three quarters of students move on to a higher level programme of study from foundation and intermediate level. The percentage of students who progress to higher education at the end of either two or three years of advanced level study is high.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies within and between most subjects; this is reflected in part in the differences evident in students' outcomes across subjects and qualification types. In most subjects a minority of teaching is good but a higher proportion requires improvement and a small amount of teaching is not effective enough. A few lessons contain outstanding features, mainly in arts subjects.
- Teachers provide good support for students and most students make at least adequate progress. In the most effective lessons, teachers expect a great deal of their students; they motivate and challenge them so that they make better than expected progress. They engage students with a variety of activities that develop and support independent learning; directed individual questioning is used well to test and check progress and understanding.
- Where students' progress is at best satisfactory, teachers are far less demanding and sometimes help students too much. In vocational subjects, learning activities are often based on completing coursework and their learning is narrowly focused as a result. In a very few lessons, the learning targets set and progress made by students are insufficient.
- Teachers' planning is inconsistent in structuring lessons to make sure that the main learning points are reinforced and consolidated and that students develop independent learning and study skills. Students become passive when teachers over direct lessons or talk too much. Questioning is often undemanding because open, whole group questions fail to assess students' understanding or provide sufficient challenge.
- Students rightly speak highly of the support they receive from teachers. Students at risk of underperformance are identified and monitored very effectively. Although attendance is good, some poor punctuality has a negative impact on a minority of lessons.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective and well-managed support. Where additional needs are identified, support is provided quickly, enabling students to overcome

barriers to learning. Support provided equips those with needs such as dyslexia and Asperger's syndrome with the skills and confidence to become more independent students.

- Learning resources are used very well to promote and stimulate learning. The learning resource centre is very well used by students; staff are pro-active in engaging students to develop their literacy through student-led book clubs and competitions. Information and learning technology are used well with a good virtual learning environment that supports learning both in and outside the classroom.
- Initial assessment is thorough at identifying the needs of individual students, although teachers do not always use this sufficiently in planning learning. Students receive targeted additional support for English, mathematics and functional skills. In addition, support for staff and students in the use of workshops to embed English and mathematics has been reintroduced to raise standards, particularly on GCE AS-level courses.
- The newly developed electronic individual learning plans are comprehensive and are starting to support students in achieving their goals using agreed and aspirational targets. Good practice in target setting is not yet widespread as guidance to students on how to achieve their targets and improve is sometimes insufficient. Whilst subject specific targets are more often measurable and timely, those for behaviour and personal development lack preciseness.
- Assessment of work is inconsistent in helping and guiding students to improve. In contrast to good practice where feedback is helpful, including correcting grammar and spelling, less effective practice exists where feedback is insufficiently detailed. Attention to correcting grammar, spelling and punctuation is increasing but not consistently effective.
- Initial advice and guidance are effective in supporting students and ensuring they are placed on the right programme of study. Students speak highly of the support they receive in making such choices and feel that staff are impartial when offering them guidance. Inspectors concurred with this view.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is strong in extra-curricular activities but promotion within lessons is limited. Opportunities within lessons to promote and discuss equality and diversity are often missed. However, when discussions develop these show that students have a good grounding in mutual respect and a growing awareness of understanding difference.

Visual and performing arts

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- In visual and performing arts, students learn well and make good progress because the curriculum meets their needs well and teaching and learning are good. Nearly all students complete their courses and many achieve grades higher than expected compared to their prior attainment.
- Teachers use well-focused strategies that take account of students' interests and ability range. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable; they write interesting, exciting assignments and plan demanding, well-structured lessons. Teachers ask searching questions and respond dynamically to students' queries.
- Many students produce good work informed and developed successfully through wide research into historical and contemporary practice. In visual arts, work shows skilful use of media and confidence with colour to successfully convey emotion and mood. Students are taught appropriate drawing skills; however, some advanced level students do not experiment enough with different approaches to drawing.
- In performing arts, the quality of students' productions is high often with challenging abstract and conceptual dimensions to event design. Students connect theory with practice productively. For example in an acting lesson, students developed characterisation skills successfully through applying character development theories combining 'back-stories' and imaginative skills.
- Students use logbooks and sketchbooks well to record their ideas and learning points. In a few

subjects such as technical theatre, students' use of blogs contributes well to sharing experiences. Students' written work and annotation in sketchbooks is insufficiently analytical or evaluative in a minority of cases.

- Students work well independently because teachers have high expectations of them; this motivates and engages them well. Students use open-access studios and rehearsal spaces productively between lessons to complete or prepare work. Attendance is high and punctuality is good in most lessons.
- Teachers give good verbal feedback which helps students to gain confidence in making creative decisions and in practising new and demanding skills. Teachers are good at responding to opportunities that arise during learning activities and readily share ideas to the benefit of the whole group. In this way students learn much from each other's work.
- Students are assessed frequently. Most feedback on completed work enables students to extend their knowledge and improve their attainment over time. In the best feedback, teachers evaluate both the students' ability to develop ideas and find creative solutions as well as their application of practical skills. However, the quality of written feedback varies with some being too general and with insufficiently clear improvement points.
- Studios and performance spaces are new, well-equipped, pleasant and conducive to learning. Extensive displays of students' work in visual arts provide stimulating and informative insight into what can be achieved. For example, in the textiles and fashion studio some displays show how fabrics can be constructed in unorthodox and sculptural ways to emphasise structure and texture in garments.
- In music, dance and drama, spaces are purpose built and match professional standards. In a technical theatre lesson, students collaborated well to produce a full-sized 'house of horror' through which staff and students were to be led. Students worked energetically in pairs developing lighting, audio-visual and production sets to create the house in the college theatre.
- Learning activities encourage students to develop self-awareness and appreciate difference. Students inform and exchange ideas readily from broad contextual and artistic enquiry across a wide spectrum of cultures and inspirations. Additional support in the studios is effective in enabling all students to participate and learn together.

Business studies including law and legal services

Learning programmes for 16-18

Learning programmes for 19+

Requires improvement

- Students' outcomes vary considerably across subjects and qualification types. Most students complete their courses, in part because of the good support provided by teachers. However, although the majority of students achieve a pass, too few achieve a high grade, which reflects the limited extent of challenge in some lessons.
- Students are enthusiastic and motivated about their work. Most enjoy their studies and are keen to do well. The large majority of teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use examples drawn from business and legal contexts well to support students' understanding of topics.
- A minority of teaching and learning is good. The most effective learning takes place when teachers manage lessons well, set a productive pace and link theory and practice closely. In these lessons, students participate in meaningful activities which reinforce the main learning points.
- Too many lessons are less effective because teachers do not make sure that students consolidate their learning or build on previous knowledge. In these lessons there is too little opportunity for students to develop deeper understanding of topics and teaching is undemanding. Promoting and checking of learning is infrequent and often ineffective.
- Students make good use of information and learning technology as well as subject-based textbooks. Teachers promote professional business standards of conduct and they generally manage the classroom environment well. Some subject groups are large and are taught in

confined environments which restrict the use of valuable group work.

- The quality of written feedback varies. The majority of teachers provide helpful verbal feedback but some written feedback is generic, brief and lacks a focus on improvement points, including in the use of spelling, grammar, punctuation and the use of technical language.
- Students get good opportunities to work with industry. Programme leaders have developed good links with different businesses and organisations to enhance the curriculum. Students are able to interact with industry professionals and work on real life projects as part of their course, which provides them with current sector knowledge.
- Teachers do not differentiate activities sufficiently according to students' ability range. Satisfactory initial assessment includes recording students' experience; however, use of this information to plan and set individual learning targets for students is often insufficient. In many lessons, all students work on the same task and at the same pace with little account taken of students' prior learning.
- Support and care for students are good. Additional learning support for students with specific learning needs is of good quality. Learning support staff provide good support for students in completing tasks and activities.
- Equality and diversity are not routinely reinforced in lessons. While teachers encourage good working and social relationships built on trust and respect, opportunities are not maximised to further promote, highlight or reinforce specific equality and diversity issues. This restricts exploration, debate and discussion about such issues within business and legal contexts.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The college's mission to strive for excellence is supported by its values and strategic plan. A small minority of development points are not clearly translated into an action plan, making it harder to evaluate whether they are being achieved. Efforts to raise students' ambitions and broaden their horizons are systematic, for example, through progression days with employers and higher education providers.
- Governors know the college well and monitor its progress closely, offering senior managers both support and searching challenge in equal measure. They are unequivocal in their determination to eradicate underperformance and have encouraged the use of disciplinary measures where appropriate.
- Arrangements for performance management exist but are not effective in eliminating unevenness in the quality of teaching and learning. Links between performance management, lesson observations, examination results, and whole college planning of professional development are weak. College leaders are acutely aware of this lack of rigour and have already begun to take action.
- Self-assessment is broadly accurate, uses performance data fully but does not evaluate progression statistics. The sustained improvements needed are not yet secured; AS results declined markedly in 2012 and the proportion of high grades in most results has not improved. Managers listen closely to students' views, including drawing on course level consultations and the views of the student council to inform improvements.
- Lesson observations provide teachers with basic improvement points, but there is insufficient exploitation of teaching observations to share good practice. In addition, the strengths and weaknesses of lessons are not sufficiently well analysed in self-assessment. As a result, improvement plans do not focus enough on improving the craft of teaching and learning.
- The curriculum is coherent and well planned. It is based on sound analysis of data and close collaboration with local schools and universities; it meets the needs and interests of its students and local community. The distinctive range of courses provides good opportunities to progress from foundation through to advanced level.
- Equality and diversity are at the heart of the strategic plan and values; all staff promote positive attitudes to equality and diversity well. Staff receive appropriate training but governors have not

had recent training. The analysis and reporting on staff matters relating to equality and diversity are underdeveloped.

- The analysis of the performance of different groups of students is comprehensive, with a particular focus on the underachievement of White British men. Managers work closely with other providers and agencies to tackle this issue, but impact is not significant. Gaps in achievement between several smaller groups are not closing sufficiently.
- Arrangements to ensure that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can participate fully in college life are exemplary. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated and the very few complaints are not related to equal opportunities. The gender and ethnic profile of staff and governors matches closely that of the college community.
- Procedures for safeguarding students are good, supported by regular staff training. Work with a wide range of agencies to ensure students' well-being is long-standing and highly commendable. These organisations include the police, domestic violence unit, a charity dealing with young people in refuges, a unit dealing with forced marriages, to name but a few.
- The records, monitoring and support of young people at risk are exemplary. The single central record of employment checks is maintained appropriately. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory, supported by frequent reports on accidents and incidents.

Record of Main Findings (RMF 2012)

Provider name: Gateway Sixth Form College

Learning types:

16-18 learning programmes leading to qualifications: FE full-time courses;

19+ learning programmes leading to qualifications: FE full-time courses

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work-based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3		3	3					
Outcomes for students	3		3	2					
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3		3	3					
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3		3	3					

Subject areas graded for quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Visual and performing arts	2
Business studies including law and legal services	3

Provider details

Provider name	
Inspection dates	September 2012
Lead inspector	Philippa Francis HMI
Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of students	16-18
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	1,372 2011/12
Principal/CEO	Ms Suzanne Overton - Edwards
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2009
Website address	www.gateway.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection				
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Total number of full-time students excluding apprenticeships	176	294	995	N/A
Age of full-time students				
	14-16	16-18	19+	
Total by age	N/A	1,341	124	
Number of part-time students				
	N/A			
Number of main sites	1			
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)			

Additional socio-economic information

Gateway Sixth Form College is a small college based on one main site approximately three miles north-east of Leicester City centre. Two other sixth form colleges and a general further education college are based in the city centre. A second general further education college is based south of the city centre. The college's curriculum is not typical of a sixth form college as it includes a wide range of provision at foundation and intermediate level. Attainment on entry to the college is lower than the average in sixth form colleges.

Leicester is a densely populated large city with a highly diverse population. The proportion of the city's population from minority ethnic groups is much higher than average. Levels of deprivation and unemployment rates are above average.

Information about this inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on students' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gather the views of students. These views are reflected in the report. Inspectors observed learning sessions and assessments. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Subject inspectors looked in detail at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in visual and performing arts, and business studies including law and legal services.

What inspection judgements mean

Provider		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding provider is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its students' needs. This ensures that students are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good provider is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its students' needs. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A provider that requires improvement is performing less well than it might be reasonably expected in one or more of the key areas. This provider will receive a full inspection 12-18 months after the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A provider that is inadequate is one where the provider is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and/or training and the provider's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the provider. This provider will receive a re-inspection within 12-15 months after the date of this inspection.

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