

King George V College

Follow-up re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second re-inspection monitoring visit to King George V College following their inspection in October 2014, which found the college to be inadequate overall. At the inspection in October, outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of leadership and management were judged inadequate. Inspectors graded three subject areas; English and modern foreign languages and business and law were judged to require improvement, and science was judged inadequate.

The first monitoring visit took place in November 2014. It found a number of weaknesses in the post-inspection action plan and recommended that urgent action was needed on a number of issues. The findings of this visit are outlined below.

Themes

| What progress have leaders and managers made in producing and implementing a clear action plan to address the areas for improvement identified at inspection? | Reasonable progress |
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Following the first re-inspection monitoring visit in November 2014, leaders and managers have made rapid improvements in areas of greatest concern, including performance management and governance. They have produced a revised action plan that includes actions to address the majority of weaknesses identified at the last inspection, and clear statements about the expected improvements for students that will result from each action. The action plan now includes relevant and challenging targets to be achieved by specific dates up to November 2015. However, it does not include actions or targets for progression from AS to A-level programmes or for progression into higher education and employment. The section of the plan on study programmes is insufficiently specific about actions that leaders and managers will take to ensure that all students benefit from individualised study programmes.

Leaders and managers are closely monitoring progress that the college is making towards achieving the actions in the revised plan. Following frequent progress reviews, they assess the risk of not achieving each action and identify further action where necessary. The accuracy of the risk assessment is broadly accurate. However, the low risk indicated for outcomes for learners on AS and A-level programmes may be over-optimistic as the college's new assessment process is not yet fully in place. Therefore, managers are not yet able to predict with sufficient accuracy the grades that students are likely to achieve.

What progress have leaders and managers made in changing the culture of low expectations for students? Reasonable progress

The senior management team has communicated very clearly to managers and teachers the high standards that the college aspires to achieve and the expected level of performance. Managers and teachers are fully aware that non-compliance with the college's strategy to improve quality will result in prompt action. This has resulted in a difficult few months with a few teachers leaving the college. The changes have caused some concerns among students, and senior managers need to communicate fully with students, especially those on A-level programmes, to make clear the reasons for the changes and the benefits that will result. They should also provide extra support for students on modern foreign language courses whose education has been disrupted during this period of change.

Despite the recent difficulties, the action taken by senior managers has already resulted in a more positive culture in the college. Senior managers now need to consider how they can fully recognise and celebrate the progress and the achievements of their students.

Students' preparation for learning and work has improved since the last monitoring visit. Managers and teachers make clear to students the college's expectations about what students need to bring to their lessons and how they should demonstrate their readiness to work. Posters in classrooms reinforce these expectations. Most students now have well-organised files that include their assessed work. They speak positively about the more rigorous assessment that has been introduced and the detailed written feedback that they receive from their teachers about their progress.

Senior managers have introduced arrangements to support students who are not making sufficient progress to achieve their target grade. Students can now attend study days and extra sessions, and A-level students can attend AS lessons where appropriate. However, not all students who need extra support are attending additional sessions. Senior managers need to monitor attendance closely, take action to improve this where necessary, and evaluate the impact of the extra support in improving students' progress.

More challenging targets are now set for individual courses on the A-level and BTEC diploma programmes. Senior managers have communicated these targets to other managers and to teachers, and they monitor progress closely through reviews of the post-inspection action plan.

What progress has the college made in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have taken swift action to improve the monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have evaluated the quality of all teachers' lessons through regular 'learning walks' and scrutiny of students' work. This has enabled them to identify accurately areas of concern and take action quickly to improve the quality of provision.

The majority of teachers monitor students' progress towards their target grades rigorously through a four-weekly assessment cycle of tests and more regular written homework. This enables them to identify quickly where students need extra support to improve their progress, and ensures that students know precisely what they need to do to improve. These changes are very recent, but where they have been introduced successfully, they are already beginning to have a positive impact on students' progress. The new assessment cycle now needs to be implemented fully in all subject areas.

Leaders and managers have introduced a standard approach to planning lessons to ensure that students participate actively in their learning. Inspectors carried out several lesson observations and found that teachers were using a wide range of activities to challenge students and to encourage reflection through good use of peer support and evaluation. While the new standard approach to lesson planning is having a positive impact, senior managers should take care to ensure that it meets the needs of all students, and that it does not stifle creativity and flexibility, particularly among the highest performing teachers.

The post-inspection action plan indicates that a number of actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning are planned but have not yet been implemented. Leaders and managers need to implement quickly actions to improve the development of students' English and mathematics skills, to prepare students for employment, and to promote equality and diversity.

What progress has been made in strengthening performance management to enable improvements to be made quickly? Significant progress

Performance management has improved significantly since the last monitoring visit. Senior managers have introduced a new appraisal system and carried out a full review of the performance of every teacher in the last eight weeks. The reviews take account of findings from lesson observations, analysis of students' progress, and teachers' commitment to a culture of high expectations. The records of the performance reviews include a full evaluation and grading of each teacher's performance, challenging targets for improvement, and a comprehensive individual

action plan. Teachers whose performance is a cause for concern are following formal capability procedures to improve the quality of their teaching. This more robust approach has already led to noticeable improvements in performance. It is important that managers identify regular review dates and monitor the improvements in performance to ensure that all teachers support students to achieve at the highest possible level.

Following the departure of some teachers, senior managers have appointed replacements. These teachers have developed positive working relationships with their students in the first few weeks. Senior managers need to ensure that they provide sufficient support and development for new teachers, and particularly in subject areas taught by just one teacher.

Teachers have participated in a wide range of professional development activity in recent weeks. They attend weekly training sessions to develop their skills in priority areas for the college such as planning lessons and effective assessment. Teachers are beginning to share good practice successfully through peer observations and activities that bring teachers from different subject areas together to share ideas about how they can improve their practice.

What progress has been made in strengthening governance? Significant progress

Following the previous monitoring visit, governors have acted quickly to improve the structure, composition and operation of the board. A skills audit has identified where the board needs strengthening. Five governors have resigned and a new chair and deputy chair have been appointed. Plans are in place to make new appointments to the board including governors with significant experience of leadership in a post-16 environment. Governors have created a new sub-committee to monitor the college's progress in implementing the post-inspection action plan.

Governors on the restructured board have produced a detailed and helpful action plan in response to the findings of the last inspection, the last monitoring visit, and the recent report of the Sixth Form College Commissioner. They understand fully that improvements need to be made quickly in order to benefit current students. The reports and minutes of recent meetings of the board show that governors have increased significantly the rigour and the level of support and challenge that they provide to the principal and senior managers. It is essential that governors sustain these recent improvements.

The minutes of the meetings of the board now include clearer actions for leaders and managers. However, governors need to ensure that they monitor progress against these actions frequently rather than waiting until the following meeting to check that they have been carried out.

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