

King George V College

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the fourth re-inspection monitoring visit to King George V College following publication of the inspection report on 23 October 2014 which found the college to be inadequate overall. At the inspection, outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of leadership and management were 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 second visit in January 2015 found that managers had made reasonable progress in changing the culture of low expectations and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, but weaknesses remained in these areas. Significant progress had been made in strengthening governance and performance management. On the third visit in April 2015, inspectors judged that leaders and managers had made significant progress in introducing more robust student assessment and feedback arrangements, and reasonable progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning, monitoring and reporting on students' progress, and developing the skills of recently recruited teachers. Inspectors also reported that improvements to governance were beginning to have a positive impact on ensuring that governors supported and challenged leaders and managers to make improvements quickly.

The findings of this visit are outlined below.

Themes

What impact have leaders' and managers' actions to improve standards had on the college's performance?

Reasonable progress

Actions taken by leaders and managers since the last inspection to improve standards resulted in improvements in a number of aspects of students' performance in 2014/15. Although the success rate on the AS-level programme fell slightly as a result of a higher proportion of students leaving the college before the end of their course, the pass rate among those students who were retained remained unchanged from 2013/14, and a much higher proportion of students achieved or exceeded their expected grades based on their prior attainment. The proportion of students who completed and achieved their A-level qualifications increased in 2014/15, and more students achieved grades A and B than in the previous year. However, fewer A-level students than in the previous year achieved their target grades. Students' performance varied considerably across subject areas on both the A-level and AS-

level programmes, with poor performance in a significant minority of subjects some of which leaders and managers had not anticipated.

Approximately one in five A-level students who completed their courses in 2014/15 did not progress to higher education. Managers have taken insufficient action to support students not progressing to higher education. Among the students who did progress to higher education, a significant minority did not secure a place at their first choice of institution. Too many students who completed the first year of their course have not returned to the college, and managers have not yet analysed in sufficient depth the reasons why so many students left their course.

Leaders and managers have taken action quickly to hold course leaders to account for the quality of provision and students' achievement in their subject areas through the introduction of a rigorous review of performance. All course leaders have produced an analysis of the reasons for the profile of examination results in their subjects, and managers are currently carrying out reviews with each course leader to identify targets and actions for improvement during the coming months. However, in a minority of cases, course leaders' initial analysis of poor performance in their area is insufficiently rigorous. Managers need to ensure that all course leaders and teachers identify accurately the reasons for poor performance and take actions quickly to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure that a much higher proportion of students make rapid progress and achieve their qualifications and expected grades. Where necessary, managers should provide appropriate support and challenge for course leaders and teachers through the college's capability procedure.

What progress have leaders and managers made in improving further the quality of teaching and learning?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have provided a wide range of relevant and helpful training for teaching staff over the last few months with a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning. All staff have carried out recent online training on safeguarding and on preventing radicalisation.

In many A- and AS-level subject areas, training and support for teaching staff has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. During the visit, inspectors saw many examples of dynamic and engaging teaching that challenges and inspires students, and enables students to make progress rapidly. Many new AS-level students have already made rapid progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge in their subject areas.

In other A-level and AS level subject areas, particularly those where examination results were weak in 2014/15, and on many vocational courses, teaching and learning still require improvement. Too much teaching in these subjects fails to provide sufficient challenge to enable students to acquire quickly the skills,

knowledge and confidence that they need to succeed. Students are not always clear about the purpose of activities they carry out and, as a result, some lose interest in their learning. Teachers do not always use questioning effectively to check, consolidate and extend learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers provide students with handouts and presentations that include spelling or grammatical errors. Leaders and managers need to take action quickly to ensure that the best practice in the college is quickly replicated in the weaker subject areas.

New students have benefitted from a comprehensive and helpful introduction to college life through a well-planned and relevant induction day. However, there was insufficient consideration of safeguarding during the induction, and it is essential that managers quickly provide information and support for new students on how to stay safe at the college and online. Managers should also ensure that students are made aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism at induction, in tutorials and in their lessons.

A wide range of work-related activity has been planned for students on A-level and AS-level courses during the current year including voluntary work, visits to employers, and enrichment activities on working in vocational areas such as education and law. Students are currently choosing the work-related and enrichment activities in which they will participate. Work placements are currently being planned, in partnership with the local Enterprise and Business Partnership, for students on vocational programmes and for AS- and A-level students who have expressed an interest in carrying out a placement.

How successfully do the revised assessment and feedback arrangements ensure that students are clear about their progress and what they need to do to improve their work?

Reasonable progress

The outcomes of the recently introduced monthly timed assessments provide a reasonably accurate prediction of the progress that students are making, and enable teachers to intervene appropriately when students are falling behind. Leaders, senior managers and governors now have detailed information about the progress that individual students are making, and are able to monitor performance across all subject areas. Students are very positive about the impact of the assessment and feedback arrangements in enabling them to measure their progress and identify what they need to do to improve further.

On a small minority of courses, teachers provide too much information to students about the content of the timed assessments and spend time in lessons preparing students for their assessments. As a result, the assessments do not provide an accurate indicator of the progress that students are making and result in managers having an over-optimistic view of individual students' progress. It is essential that

managers ensure full compliance with the assessment arrangements among all teachers, and ensure that the assessments are carried out appropriately.

What further progress have managers made To ensure that those who are falling behind with their work benefit from additional support, and what has the impact been? **Reasonable progress**

Study leave and revision time for students is now managed much more rigorously. Students had a coherent plan of revision in advance of their examinations in the summer and attended structured revision sessions. Current students on A-level programmes reported that the support that they received in advance of their AS-level examinations was helpful in enabling them to achieve their target grades.

Students who are falling behind with their work receive additional help during the year to help them catch up, including individual support. However, too many students whose progress was slow during 2014/15 received support that was not effective enough to enable them achieve their target grades, particularly in subjects where performance was weakest. Managers and teachers do not always act quickly enough to tackle instances of poor attendance which results in many students who miss lessons not making the progress expected of them.

What impact have the improvements to governance had on supporting and challenging leaders and managers to implement quickly the actions in the post-inspection action plan? **Reasonable progress**

Governors have recently formed a new performance monitoring sub-committee. New governors have brought further educational expertise to the board and to the new committee. Minutes of the committee demonstrate that governors are now asking for more detailed information to enable them to hold leaders and managers to account for the college's performance more effectively. They received detailed information about the performance of each subject area in 2014/15, and subsequently asked senior managers to analyse the data to identify underperforming subjects. The report submitted by senior managers does not, however, provide a sufficiently accurate analysis and slightly overstates the level of performance.

The chair and vice-chair of the board have met informally several times with the Principal since publication of the 2014/15 examination results in August, and they have a very good understanding of current concerns and areas where previous management actions have not had the desired impact. They have asked the senior leadership team to put in place a range of actions to improve performance.

The minutes of the most recent board meeting in June 2015 show that governors provided appropriate challenge to senior leaders, particularly around students' achievements and creating an aspirational culture and ethos in the college. However, the full board has not met since publication of the examination results to discuss current concerns or to agree priorities and actions. The full board is not yet reviewing management actions quickly or frequently enough to ensure that they are resulting in rapid improvements to students' progress and achievement.

Whilst the minutes of board meetings record the discussions and note actions that governors request leaders and managers to take, these are not always stated clearly enough and do not always include targets for completion and review. As a result, actions required of senior managers are not always communicated well enough or followed up at the next board meeting.

Governors have not received a recent report from senior managers on the progress against actions in the college post-inspection action plan, which has not been updated since the examination results were published. The senior leadership team urgently needs to review progress and provide an updated report to governors before the next board meeting in October 2015.

At the last visit, weaknesses in the governors' action plan were noted. Governors have not yet agreed on a new action plan in line with the code of good governance.

Governors established a working party, including staff and students, to develop the college's new vision and mission, and this has been agreed and communicated across the college following approval in June 2015. However, governors have not challenged the relevance of the college's strategic objectives rigorously enough. The board reviewed the objectives in June 2015 but decided not to recommend any changes, and the objectives remain the same as they were in 2011. Senior managers took the decision to make no changes to the objectives even though several of them are unrealistic and unachievable in the current academic year.

The number of students enrolled in the current year is significantly below the college's target, and governors need to review the resulting weaker financial position and the future viability and sustainability of the college.

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