

# Gateway Sixth Form College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130755

**Name of lead inspector:** Bob Hamp HMI

**Inspection date(s):** 24–25 May 2017

**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 Gateway Sixth Form College following publication of the inspection report on 17 November 2016. That inspection found the provider to be inadequate for: overall effectiveness; leadership and management; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; outcomes for learners; and personal development, behaviour and welfare. Of the three provision types inspected, 16 to 19 study programmes were inadequate, and traineeships and provision for learners with high needs required improvement.

### **Themes**

**The fitness for purpose of the post-inspection action plan, the quality of its monitoring and reporting arrangements and the rigour of senior leaders' and governors' scrutiny.**

#### **Reasonable progress**

Version 5 (produced 16 May 2017) of the college-wide post-inspection action plan (PIAP) has a clear focus on the six main themes and priorities identified at the previous monitoring visit, likely to lead to substantial and rapid improvement. Individuals and groups responsible for key actions provide interim progress reports to the college executive team who monitor progress by using a red, amber or green rating. Governors, managers and staff receive regular updates of the college-wide plan. Monthly quality meetings ensure that programme area PIAPs are closely aligned to key actions and are monitored closely.

Staff now have a better understanding of the key objectives and how they can contribute to progress and quality improvements. Governors have a good understanding of the key objectives, improvement actions and progress made. A new management information system, to provide more comprehensive reporting arrangements, will be available in September. Currently, very few key objectives are rated as green.

**Actions to strengthen governance and governors' knowledge of college performance and the impact of their holding managers to account.**

#### **Significant progress**

Governance has been strengthened significantly through the appointment of a new chair of governors and two new governors with relevant experience. Governors are clearer about their role in improving the learning experience for all students and the contributions and interventions they can make to be effective. For example, they have appointed a highly experienced interim principal who has introduced a new organisation structure to support proposed changes to the curriculum, timetabling

and meetings. This has led to several staff leaving the college, allowing the opportunity to appoint new staff and promote existing staff to support the new management structure focused on teaching, learning and assessment.

A skills audit and performance review of governors have taken place aimed at building on strengths and identifying areas for development. As a result, governors have received external support and training to ensure that they challenge senior managers more effectively. For example, they have received data analysis and performance monitoring training from the chair of governors of another further education college. Consequently, the interim principal has been set key performance indicators related to priority areas such as students' attendance, achievement and progress as measured by value-added performance. Governors' meetings focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; the senior management team has a better understanding of their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

**The effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment at meeting students' needs and challenging them to make good progress and achieve or exceed targets.**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have implemented an observation system that focuses rightly on the progress of students rather than the activities of teachers. As a result, there was general agreement of the key strengths and weaknesses identified in teaching, learning and assessment during joint observations with inspectors. In most sessions, students were able to work at their own pace, but this was often too slow and was rarely challenged by the teacher to encourage a more independent approach to learning – reflecting skills needed in students' next steps into higher education or employment. As the vast majority of observations focused on preparing for examinations, revision and exam techniques, it was not possible to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across a broad range of activities during this visit.

Assessment practice, including marking submitted work, feedback to students and planning lessons to meet individual needs, has been the focus of teachers' professional development. They are encouraged to observe each other's teaching and share their good practice. The feedback available to teachers following formal observations of teaching does not focus on the impact that teaching has on learning; as a result, individual actions plans do not help staff to improve their practice.

Leaders use quality monitoring meetings to review key performance indicators for each programme and set actions to address underperformance. Although staff also track students' progress, the current system does not enable them to monitor the progress of each student against their target grades.

**Actions taken to make better use of the good relationships with stakeholders to increase the number of students who participate in meaningful work-related learning.**

**Reasonable progress**

Existing and new relationships with employers and employment agencies have helped to provide around 430 students with work experience. This is already well over double for the previous year. A target increase in work experience of a further 25% by Easter 2018 has been set.

As part of the new employability strategy, programme area post-inspection action plans monitor employability training and work experience for students, and formal observations include the development of employability skills, such as teamwork and communication skills in teaching sessions. This has led to an increased awareness of the need to identify suitable employability training and work experience for students' study programmes by all staff.

A work experience and employability strategy for September 2017 is being finalised. This will include employability tutorial sessions for all students. A new work experience/placement officer will start in June to help develop an employer database. All new students will provide information about their part-time work and the type of work experience they prefer. This will help provide students with impartial information, advice and guidance to place them on suitable programmes or 'signpost' them to other programmes or providers, where necessary.

**More rigorous analysis of student destination information to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate and students are prepared well for further study and employment.**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have created a simple but sensible system for capturing the destination data of the current cohort when they leave through face-to-face exit interviews. This approach will enable leaders to gather qualitative data and relate it to students' starting points and intended destinations. Leaders are aware of the need to complete follow-up activities around sustained destinations and plan to do this for summer leavers. Although plans for the current cohort are logical and sensible, it is too early to measure the impact that these will have on the college's ability to capture destination information, and the extent to which the information will inform the shape of the curriculum.

## **Actions taken to improve students' attendance and punctuality through improved and consistent support arrangements.**

### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders have secured a minor improvement in the year-to-date attendance rate for 2016/17 in comparison to the final overall attendance figure for 2015/16. However, a significant gap between students' attendance in their main subjects and in English and mathematics still remains.

Leaders recognise that previous expectations of students were too low and now have initiatives in place to promote higher expectations and performance. The recent introduction of a positive rewards system has had a small, measurable impact on the students' attendance.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders and managers were unable to provide accurate data relating to attendance. More reliable attendance data is now available to leaders and managers, but this does not allow them to identify trends accurately and implement actions to address attendance issues. For example, data is at headline level only and this does not provide curriculum teams with the specific programme-level information that they need; as a result, they are not aware of where challenges exist.

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