

# Gateway Sixth Form College

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

---

**Unique reference number:** 130755

**Name of lead inspector:** Russ Henry HMI

**Inspection date:** 28 November 2018

**Type of provider:** Sixth form college

**Address:** Colin Grundy Drive  
Leicester  
Leicestershire  
LE5 1GA

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Gateway Sixth Form College was inspected in January 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Gateway Sixth Form College, located to the north-east of Leicester city centre, is one of two sixth form colleges in Leicester. A further education college and several schools with sixth forms are nearby. Educational attainment within Leicester is lower than in other parts of the country. Unemployment is higher, and those who are in work are much more likely to be in low-skilled occupations than is the case elsewhere in England. Gateway is not a typical sixth form college. Although it offers an A-level programme, most students study vocational courses at level 2 and level 3. The college attracts students from a diverse range of backgrounds and with varied prior academic attainment.

### Themes

#### How much progress have leaders and managers made in improving outcomes for students?

#### Significant progress

Managers have taken a number of actions that have enhanced the culture of the college and led to improved qualification outcomes for students. They have introduced learning performance tutors who provide academic coaching and pastoral support. They have implemented improved information systems. Staff use these well to monitor the progress of students and to share information that helps them to provide support for those students who need it. Managers have placed an increased focus on attendance and punctuality, which has resulted in substantial improvements to both.

The proportion of students who achieve their qualifications has risen considerably and is above the rate for other colleges. Improvements are evident across all provision types and at all levels.

Students made better progress on their main qualifications in 2017/18 than they had in previous years. A-level and applied-general students achieved the grades that might be expected, given their starting points. For those students who took a one-year level 3 programme, their progress is high compared with their starting points. Managers are well aware that students in a few subjects did less well than might be expected, and continue their efforts to improve outcomes in these areas.

In 2017/18, only students who had achieved a grade 3 in GCSE English and mathematics retook these examinations, while others took functional skills

qualifications instead. The proportion of students who achieved a high grade (4–9) in GCSE mathematics was more than twice the national rate. Although the proportion was lower for English, it was still well above the national rate. The current policy is to enrol all students on GCSE English and mathematics programmes if they have not yet gained a grade 4 or better. As a result, it is likely that the overall proportion of students who achieve high grades will decrease in the current year. However, managers' aspirations are for all students to make good progress towards gaining a grade 4 or better, regardless of their starting points.

Although it is too early in the year to make reliable predictions about outcomes for students in 2018/19, all indications are positive. Assessments suggest that students are making similar progress to that made by students last year. Attendance and retention are both high. Managers' and teachers' increasingly sophisticated use of monitoring software helps to identify students in need of additional help.

**How much impact have recently introduced initiatives had on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment?**

**Reasonable progress**

Teachers have participated in professional development activities and have access to resources to help them to adopt a range of different approaches to teaching. They find these resources helpful. They are now clear about the expectations managers have for the progress and outcomes of their students. They feel that managers have empowered them to explore new approaches to teaching. Many participate in subject- or qualification-based groups that support their members through, for example, peer observation. Teachers have higher expectations of what their students can achieve and the learning behaviours they should exhibit.

These changes have not yet been fully effective. Despite teachers' commitment and enthusiasm, only around half of the lessons observed during this visit were highly effective. In several lessons, teachers tried imaginative ways to teach topics but these were not always appropriate. For example, teachers used peer learning or internet research to introduce new concepts. These approaches limit learning because students either lack sufficient knowledge to share with their peers or are able to find only the most basic information about the topic. These activities make poor use of time, and so the pace of the lesson is slow.

In the weakest sessions, teachers' use of question and answer is not fully effective. Teachers ask lots of low-level questions and make little attempt to challenge students to develop their thinking. On occasions, teachers accept poor or incorrect answers without challenge. When teachers undertake more detailed assessment of students' understanding, it is evident that students have not fully grasped the topic. The use of mini whiteboards for question and answer sessions is often distracting. In a few lessons, too much activity does not relate clearly to the material that students need to learn. On occasion, a few students who finished activities quickly were left with little to do while others finished the tasks.

In the strongest lessons, teachers are very clear about their expectations. They pace activities well so that students receive challenge throughout the lesson. In these

lessons, students make clear and detailed notes that accurately reference prior topics. Teachers' explanations are clear, and activities match learning objectives closely. For example, in one lesson, the teacher, who had identified a gap in students' knowledge, provided clear explanations that addressed likely misconceptions. The teacher followed this up with practice exercises to ensure that students understood the topic.

Teachers enjoy good relationships with students and so students behave well.

**How much progress have teachers made in improving the quality of feedback they give to students?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the time of the previous inspection, teachers did not assess students' progress thoroughly enough. Oral and written feedback lacked detail and students did not always know how they could improve.

Leaders and managers have developed a strategy around assessment for learning that has led to improvements in the quality of feedback to students. Most teachers assess their students frequently, mark work promptly and upload the results to the college's information system. Managers monitor this activity closely and have a clear idea of which subject areas need development. Managers provide clear direction on using feedback to help students to develop their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Most teachers follow this guidance well.

In the best assessment feedback, teachers highlight what students do well and identify ways in which students can make improvements, even if their original work is of good quality. Students then use this feedback to help them to make improvements to their work. This enables them to develop their understanding and is highly effective.

In the weakest assessment feedback, teachers simply tick the work and write comments like 'good', rather than giving specific help on what the student needs to do to improve. This is especially evident in business, information technology and chemistry. A few teachers do not always mark work promptly.

**To what extent have governors improved the effectiveness with which they hold senior leaders to account?**

**Reasonable progress**

Governors rightly accept that at the time of the previous inspection, their scrutiny of leaders' work and the level of challenge they provided were not strong enough. Governors and leaders have done much to improve this. They have recruited board members with substantial experience of teaching, learning and assessment, provided an effective training programme and introduced a much-improved management information system. All of these developments help governors to challenge and support leaders appropriately. The improvements in outcomes for students testify to the increased effectiveness of governance.

The range and quality of reports to governors continue to improve and the imminent completion of a performance monitoring dashboard for governors will enhance this. Governors support leaders and managers to reflect more on what is working and to prioritise improvements in those areas that are not yet fully effective.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Learner View**

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Employer View**

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, 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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018