



# Gateway Sixth Form College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

Better  
education  
and care

## Inspection report

Audience  
Post-sixteen

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130755

## Contents

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Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	5
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Overall judgement	6
Main findings	8

## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Gateway Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form
Principal:	Mr N A Goffin
Address of college:	The Newarke, Leicester, LE2 7BY
Telephone number:	0116 258 0700
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Chair of governors:	Canon Michael Wilson
Unique reference number:	130755
Name of lead inspector:	Christine Dick, HMI
Dates of inspection:	16 – 20 January 2006

## Background of the organisation

1. Gateway Sixth Form College is located in Leicester city centre and is one of three sixth form colleges and a general further education (FE) college offering post-16 provision in the vicinity. Approximately 1,200 learners aged 16-18 are enrolled on college courses and some 400 adults study part-time. Learners are drawn from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A high proportion of students are from areas of significant deprivation. Some 75% of all learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many of them do not have English as their first language. Equality is promoted energetically and diversity is celebrated. The college has responded well to local initiatives and changes in the local population.
2. The curriculum is broad and provides learning opportunities from entry level to level 3. In 2004-05, courses included some 32 GCE A2 and AS levels, AVCE in 5 areas, 14 GCSE courses, and vocational courses at intermediate and foundation level in 5 subjects. There has been significant growth in Entry and level 1 provision over the past 3 years. The range of Skills for Life literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses has been extended. GCSE results in the local area are well below the national average. Many learners leave school aged 16 with low attainment in English and mathematics. Some 76% have fewer than 5 GCSEs at grades A\* to C when they start college. Approximately, one third of all learners follow courses at, or below level 2. The college's mission is 'striving for excellence in all we do'.

## Scope of the inspection

3. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
  - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
  - achievements and standards
  - quality of provision
  - leadership and management

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good : grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good : grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good : grade 2
Quality of provision	Good : grade 2
Leadership and management	Good : grade 2

*Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.*

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

4. Gateway is a good sixth form college with a well-defined sense of purpose and community. Overall leadership and management and the college's approach to educational and social inclusion are good. Governors and senior managers give clear direction and are committed to the continuous development of an inclusive learning environment. However, the use of precise targets in action planning for improvement is underdeveloped. Financial management is effective and the college provides good value for money. Most learners make good progress, attend regularly and behave responsibly; although pass rates on some courses, and most particularly at GCE AS level, are lower than the national average for similar colleges.
5. The overall quality of teaching is good and meets the needs of the majority of learners but there is insufficient challenge for the most able learners in a few lessons. The college offers a good range of provision with many opportunities for progression. Guidance and support are good. Systems for monitoring and improving attendance are outstanding. Mentors are highly successful in supporting students overcome barriers to learning. Support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities are good. The quality of the tutorial programme and support for the development of learning skills for students on AS courses is more variable.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

6. The college's capacity to improve is good. Enrolment targets are exceeded. Senior managers and curriculum teams review performance regularly and the college operates as a caring and self-critical community. The college's self-assessment report is generally accurate in its identification of strengths and areas for improvement. However, some action plan targets are imprecise and there is insufficient emphasis on relating these to whole college issues. Improvement strategies are appropriately focused on raising standards. For example, the raising achievement project plan for 2005-06 is targeting low pass rates in literacy and numeracy at levels 1 and 2. A system for the observation of teaching and learning aims to promote and develop good practice. Overall retention is high and success rates demonstrate a trend of improvement.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

7. The college has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Arrangements for the initial and diagnostic assessment of learners' literacy numeracy and language skills have been

strengthened. Communications between staff in the skills for life division and staff in other areas of the college have improved. The success rates of students receiving additional learning support are higher than those for the college as a whole. Overall pass rates on key skills qualifications are increasing. The current accommodation is well-maintained and effectively utilised. However, buildings are at capacity and delays to relocation proposals create an atmosphere of uncertainty. Employer links into the curriculum remain underdeveloped.

## Key strengths of the college

### *Strengths*

- The good progress made by learners on many courses
- Good attendance
- Good internal progression
- Highly effective learner mentor programme
- Good arrangements for initial assessment and support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Good commitment of staff to the college and its mission
- Positive and harmonious relationships

## Areas for improvement

### *The college should address:*

- Low pass rates on some courses
- The proportion of high grade passes at GCE AS and A2
- The quality and effectiveness of group tutorials
- The sharing of good practice in teaching and learning
- The rigour of target-setting and review in action planning for improvement

## Main findings

### Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

8. Typically, learners make good progress. While the overall success rate for 16-18 year olds on advanced level courses is below the national average for sixth form colleges, many students do much better than expected based on their GCSE scores at the start of the course. The overall value-added analysis, subscribed to by the college, places learner achievement, for GCE A2 and AVCE double awards, in the top 25% of scores for sixth form colleges. For example, in GCE A-level art and design, mathematics and media studies, students regularly achieve their qualification at least one grade higher than that which might be predicted at the start of their course. In 2005, value-added scores in AVCE double awards in health and social care and in art and design were particularly good. The overall proportion of high grade passes at advanced level is low. These issues have been identified within the college's self-assessment report and actions are being taken to bring about improvement. However, self-assessment has taken insufficient account of data which indicate that learners with lower GCSE attainment at the start of their course tend to make better progress than those who enter college with higher grades.
9. Overall success rates, for 16-18 year olds on GCE A-level courses, demonstrate a continuing trend of improvement. However, success rates are lower than the national average for similar colleges on GCE AS level and, most significantly, on AS geography, law, economics, accounts, business, science and psychology. Overall retention of 16-18 year olds on advanced courses, at 91% is high. For the much smaller number of adult learners at advanced level, success and retention rates have improved. Retention, on courses at levels 1 and 2 for 16-18 year olds, has been consistently high in the three years to 2005 and the retention of adult learners on similar courses has improved significantly.
10. At level 2, the achievement of high grades in GCSE mathematics has improved to 58%, from 44% in 2003. In the same period, the higher grade achievement in GCSE English improved by 11% and is now above the national figure for colleges of a similar type. However, college data for 2005 indicate low pass rates on recently introduced courses in literacy and numeracy, at levels 1 and 2. Overall pass rates on key skills qualifications have improved since the last inspection. The most significant improvement has been at level 1 in key skills communications and key skills information communication technology. Pass rates in key skills at level 3 are low. However, college data for 2005 indicate that increasing numbers of learners following the wider key skill, improving own learning and performance, are successful in achieving the qualification.
11. Most learners enjoy their lessons. They are socially confident, respectful of each other and of the college environment. Standards of behaviour are good. Attendance rates, averaging around 93%, are high. Progression to higher level courses in the college, and entry to higher education is good.



## Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

12. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the overall quality of teaching is good and meets the needs of the majority of learners. However, the system used for the observation of teaching and learning does not compare directly to that used by inspectors. The results of this process indicate a slight improvement in the performance of teachers following observations; although insufficient use is made of information to promote overall quality improvement. However, there is insufficient challenge for the most able learners in a few lessons. Good lessons are characterised by clear planning for a wide range of activities that capture learner interest and engagement. Assignment tasks are relevant to their experiences. Effective use is made of ILT and learning is underpinned with helpful resources. Teachers use questioning techniques effectively to make frequent checks on learner understanding. The pace of lessons is purposeful and learners make good progress. In weaker lessons, planning takes insufficient account of the full range of learner abilities. Teaching methods are less successful in promoting active learning and there is insufficient challenge for the most able learners.
13. Assessment is fair, accurate and carried out regularly. Feedback on marked work is generally constructive and enables students to improve their performance, although the quality of such feedback varies between subjects and teachers. All students have a formal review of their progress twice each year. Reviews record the effort made by students and their performance is compared to minimum expected target grades. Tutors use this information to work with students to produce action plans for improvement. However, the quality of some action-planning is limited by a lack of information from subject teachers and targets that are insufficiently focused.
14. All students have a thorough initial assessment, including a review of their previous learning, and diagnostic testing of literacy, numeracy and language skills during the enrolment period. The results of initial assessment are used to inform course choice and any learning support needs. Additional support is provided in lessons, or separately on a small group or individual basis. Communications between staff in the skills development division and staff in other areas of the college have improved since the last inspection. The success rates of students receiving additional learning support are higher than those for the college as a whole.
15. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is good. Equality and diversity are well promoted. A good range of provision offers many routes for progression. Learners often take a combination of vocational and academic subjects. Partnership work with local schools and good links with universities broadens opportunities for students and encourages further study. Collaborative work with other colleges and local training providers support the development of provision to address the full range of needs of young people in the area.

16. Learners participate in a wide range of enrichment activities, including voluntary activities in the local community, fundraising for charities, and a peer mentoring scheme in the college. Enrichment is particularly well developed in the arts. Many students participate in dance, theatre, creative writing, film, music, talent shows and a very popular annual fashion show. Most learners are actively involved in the planning and organisation of these events. Recent successes in team sports are tempered by a lack of facilities on the current site and relatively low participation in sporting activity.
17. The college is fulfilling its obligation to develop learner key skills in order to raise standards and improve learning. All learners are required to complete at least one key skill or Skills for Life qualification in literacy and numeracy, at a level determined by their prior attainment. Key skills are generally integrated into vocational courses. However, where key skills are offered in discrete sessions, a significant proportion of learners do not see the value of gaining key skills qualifications.
18. Advice, guidance and support are good. Strong links with local schools ensure that prospective students select appropriate courses and settle into college quickly. Publicity materials are attractively presented and make clear the high standards expected by the college. Induction programmes allow students to sample courses before confirming choices. A team of trained students help new entrants identified as at risk of leaving their courses early, to settle into college. Systems for monitoring and improving attendance are outstanding.
19. Arrangements for the identification and assessment of needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities are good. Support is provided swiftly. Individual learning support sessions are effective in challenging students to make rapid progress. Students in receipt of support improve their value added performance significantly more than the college average.
20. Learner mentors are highly successful in assisting students to overcome barriers to learning and to continue their education. A wide range of support services is available, including counselling, dyslexia support and financial assistance. The college takes effective steps to promote a healthy lifestyle. Support for those aiming for higher education encourages those from under-represented groups to gain places at university. The quality of the tutorial programme is more variable. Teaching and learning in tutorials is not monitored effectively. The tutorial programme is not effective in giving all students the opportunity to experience a personal, social and health education programme. Support for the development of learning skills for students on GCE AS level courses is patchy. However, pilot work in using the key skill 'Improving own learning and performance' qualification is proving effective in helping students on vocational courses to develop the skills they need to become more successful learners.

## Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

21. Leadership and management are good. Governors and the principal give a clear sense of strategic direction. The college is a caring and self-critical community committed to excellence and achievement for all students. The harmonious relationships highlighted at the last inspection have been sustained. Middle management has been restructured into five divisions to promote more effective leadership of the curriculum. However, the full potential of the new structure is yet to be realised. New curriculum leaders are currently engaged in an ambitious programme of professional development. Whilst the divisions have correctly identified important areas for development through self-assessment, targets in action plans are often imprecise and there is insufficient emphasis on relating these to whole college targets. Teaching and support staff are well qualified and feel valued. Annual professional performance reviews establish personal, team and college targets. Induction arrangements for new staff and opportunities for professional development are good but analysis of their impact lacks rigour. A lesson observation scheme, established in partnership with two other colleges and the University of Leicester, has led to some improvements in teaching and learning. Governors undertake training with senior and middle management and challenge constructively in meetings of the corporation and its committees. Governors and curriculum leaders receive a variety of performance data to inform their work but the use of such data in improving performance is underdeveloped.
22. Recruitment targets are exceeded. Retention, attendance and rates of progression within and beyond the college are good. Achievement and success rates for GCE A2 and AVCE double awards place the college in the top 25% of sixth form colleges for value-added scores; although some GCE AS results are below the national figure. The college is strongly committed to inclusion, equality and diversity. It complies with child protection, race relations and disability discrimination legislation. The governors discharge their responsibilities conscientiously but the disaster plan has not been comprehensively reviewed since 2001. Overall performance is regularly reviewed and analysed by gender and ethnicity. Governor and staff profiles show increased diversity since the last inspection.
23. The college occupies a small landlocked site and has a strategic objective to relocate. Buildings are inflexible, sometimes crowded and expensive to maintain. Facilities for performing arts and sport are restricted. Some parts of the college are inaccessible to students with physical disabilities. Teaching and support staff working conditions are cramped in some areas, although the college has worked effectively to create an attractive learning environment. Room utilisation is high. However, the lengthy negotiations for relocation create uncertainty. The college intranet and virtual learning environment (VLE) support effective communication. Financial management and value for money are good.

The college is well regarded in the city and plays an important role in raising educational aspiration. There are very good links with other educational establishments and related agencies but links with employers remain underdeveloped.

## Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

College Cohort Performance (2001/02-2003/04) - Success Rate - Level 1 long

**Table S-1: College success rate for level 1 long qualifications by qualification type, expected end year and age**

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	01/02	332	55	60	-4	152	34	51	-17
	02/03	480	73	60	13	39	49	55	-6
	03/04	834	85	67	18	64	81	57	24
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	59	83	69	14	0			
	02/03	60	75	66	9	0			
	03/04	31	84	70	14	0			
NVQs	01/02	0				0			
	02/03	0				0			
	03/04	0				0			
Other	01/02	273	49	58	-9	152	34	52	-17
	02/03	420	73	59	13	39	49	55	-7
	03/04	803	85	66	19	64	81	58	24

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

College Cohort Performance (2001/02 - 2003/04) - Success Rate - Level 2 long

**Table S-2: College success rate for level 2 long qualifications by qualification type, expected end year and age**

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	01/02	997	79	67	12	108	49	50	-1
	02/03	1,125	75	70	6	158	51	52	0
	03/04	1,066	85	74	10	135	70	55	14
GCSEs	01/02	769	80	72	8	84	52	56	-3
	02/03	758	76	74	2	129	55	58	-3
	03/04	698	88	77	11	97	72	62	10
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	200	74	67	7	5	20		
	02/03	186	75	68	7	0			
	03/04	213	73	73	1	2	0		
NVQs	01/02	0		53		0		50	
	02/03	0		61		0		54	
	03/04	0		61		0		58	
Other	01/02	28	86	49	37	19	42	48	-6
	02/03	181	72	58	14	29	34	49	-14
	03/04	155	85	68	17	36	67	52	15

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2002 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

College Cohort Performance (2001/02 – 2003/04) – Success Rate – Level 3 long

Table S-3: College success rate for level 3 long qualifications by qualification type, expected end year and age

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	01/02	1,546	70	78	-7	204	46	52	-7
	02/03	1,593	72	79	-7	235	60	57	3
	03/04	1,555	77	80	-3	232	70	56	14
A/A2 levels	01/02	391	87	88	-1	30	77	70	0
	02/03	399	87	89	-2	57	67	73	-6
	03/04	387	89	91	-2	74	95	75	19
AS levels	01/02	906	66	74	-8	153	39	50	-11
	02/03	791	64	75	-11	147	59	55	4
	03/04	775	69	76	-7	121	53	52	0
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	249	58	54	4	21	52		
	02/03	383	71	63	8	29	48		
	03/04	356	84	68	16	33	76		
NVQs	01/02	0				0		48	
	02-03	0				0		46	
	03/04	0				0		48	
Other	01/02	0		44		0		49	
	02/03	20	100	63	37	2	100	55	
	03/04	37	73	63	10	4	100	52	

Chart S-3: College success rate for level 3 long qualifications by qualification type, expected end year and age