

Gateway Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130755

Name of lead inspector: Melanie Kavanagh HMI

Last day of inspection: 2 October 2009

Type of provider: Sixth form college

Address: Colin Grundy Drive
Hamilton
Leicester
LE5 1GA

Telephone number: 0116 274 4500

Information about the provider

1. Gateway Sixth Form College (SFC) is one of three SFC providers in Leicester. In addition, the city has two general further education colleges offering post 16 provision and four school sixth-forms. In September 2009, the college moved from the city centre to a new building in the north-east of Leicester.
2. The 2007/08, Leicester City figures for the achievement of five or more high grade passes at GCSE including English and mathematics were lower than the national average at 37.7%. Leicester's unemployment rate is approximately double that of the region and country.
3. The population of Leicester is very diverse with significant variation in its social, economic, educational and ethnic composition. The 2001 census showed Leicester as having the highest proportion of minority ethnic groups in the country at 36% of the population. In 2008, the proportion of minority ethnic pupils in Leicester schools rose to approximately 62%. Leicester's predominant minority ethnic community is of Indian heritage.
4. The college profile reflects this pattern with the majority of students drawn from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A high proportion of students are from areas of significant deprivation with approximately 70% receiving Educational Maintenance Awards. The majority of students are bilingual with many not having English as their first language.
5. Gateway College is not a typical sixth form college. The college operates an open access policy and approximately 60% of students are studying courses at or below intermediate level. Many students enter the college with low prior attainment and provision includes specialist courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
6. In 2008/09, the college offered 35 GCE A levels and AS levels. In addition, significant vocational options at foundation, intermediate and advanced level are available. Skills for life, literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages are also available. The vast majority of students are aged 16-18 and study full-time. The largest areas of the college are in preparation for life and work and visual and performing arts. The college's mission is 'Striving for excellence in all we do'.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners:	
Further education (16 to18)	993 full-time learners 7 part-time learners
Foundation learning	314 full-time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject areas	Grade
Science and mathematics	4
Visual and performing arts	2

Overall effectiveness

7. The college's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The college demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. It has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in improving weaknesses and maintaining a satisfactory record of meeting its headline targets. Students achieve satisfactory outcomes and enjoy their learning. Most students progress well to higher level courses and to higher education and employment when they leave college. However, not enough students studying AS levels pass their examinations and the progress students on advanced level courses made in 2008/09 varied sharply between subjects. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with very good use of the excellent new resources. Not all lessons provide enough challenge and drive to make sure that all students reach their full potential and planning for students' individual needs requires further development. The college provides a good range of vocational and academic courses. The care, guidance and support students receive are good including support for welfare and financial issues. It is too early to judge both the revised arrangements for setting students' targets and the impact of the raising of entry requirements. The leaders and managers of the college share the commitment to an open access college providing a caring college community. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and

the college is happy and harmonious. Managers need to develop planning further to produce sharply focused actions for improvement.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory and students enjoy their learning. In 2008/09, students on foundation courses achieved improved success rates to the high sixth form college (SFC) national average of 2007/08. Overall success rates are below the SFC average and in 2008/09 they declined at intermediate level and remained static at advanced level.
- AS level success rates have remained static for the past three years and below the SFC average. Most students are retained on their courses but pass rates are lower than the SFC average. It is too early to judge the impact of newly revised entry requirements.
- Students progress well to higher level courses and to higher education and employment. Value-added data show most students making good progress in 2007/08 and satisfactory progress in 2008/09. However, progress is inconsistent between subjects.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students frequently develop good skills and the excellent new resources are used well to enhance learning. Support for less able students is effective but there is insufficient drive and challenge in some lessons to stretch the most able.
- The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is good with a wide range of courses from foundation to advanced level. Strong and productive partnerships promote social and community cohesion very effectively.
- Care, guidance and support are good with students' needs assessed early and support arranged promptly. The college has introduced more timely and regular setting and monitoring of targets for students but this has yet to be implemented fully.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has excellent new buildings but governors and senior managers have yet to develop a strategy to enable them to capitalise fully on the college's increased potential. Curriculum managers have not been held sufficiently to account for the performance of the areas for which they are responsible.
- The promotion and celebration of equality and diversity is good. The college provides a happy and harmonious multicultural community. The performance of different groups of students is monitored carefully and differences in outcomes, for example between male and female students, have been reduced significantly.

- Safeguarding procedures are good. The college carefully identifies potential risks and provides a very effective response to personal safety and security issues.
- The college has developed appropriate procedures for identifying the views of all students, although these views have yet to receive sufficient prominence in the self-assessment of curriculum provision.
- Value for money is satisfactory. The college uses its learning and staff resources efficiently to help students make satisfactory progress. The college makes an outstanding response to encouraging sustainability.

What does Gateway College need to do to improve further?

- Senior managers and governors should develop, as a matter of urgency, strategic objectives that will provide a framework for better informed operational planning at all levels in the college.
- Ensure that quality improvement procedures are applied rigorously in all curriculum areas to eliminate inconsistencies in performance and encourage a drive to improve standards further.
- Develop personal performance management at all levels in the college so that managers and teachers are aware of what they need to do to fulfil the college's expectations.
- Ensure that challenging and realistic targets are set and monitored closely for all students in order that they reach their full potential and that individual student needs are addressed fully in all lessons.
- Ensure the revised arrangements for assessing students on entry are applied consistently so that all students are on courses where they can succeed and have their language, literacy and numeracy skills developed appropriately.
- Establish effective and comprehensive sharing of best practice in teaching and learning in order to secure consistently good teaching across all areas of the college.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- The safe and welcoming atmosphere
- The growth of self-esteem and confidence supported by the college
- The friendly and supportive staff

- The prompt support for any student with problems
- The new building and resources
- The way the college listens to and respects their views

What learners would like to see improved:

- The long lessons and the long gaps between lessons
- The congested entry and exit arrangements at break time
- The lack of car parking for students
- Transport arrangements to the college for those students who now have to travel further

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. During 2008/09, the relocation of the college and disruption to staffing at senior management level placed a significant strain on the college. Nevertheless, since the last inspection the college has overall made satisfactory progress in improving its weaknesses whilst maintaining a satisfactory record of meeting its headline targets. However, science and mathematics is now inadequate. The rigour of self-assessment is inconsistent between curriculum areas, but in general the judgements made are accurate. The use of data and management information to support improvement are good. The college has a good range of internal policies and procedures but the lack of clear strategic objectives hampers the development of sharply focused operational plans. The college benefits from excellent new buildings and resources, well qualified and experienced staff and improving recruitment.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

9. Students' attainment of qualifications is satisfactory. Overall success rates for long courses are consistently below the high SFC average but improved steadily in the years between 2005/06 and 2007/08. College data for 2008/09 show a decline in success rates at intermediate level and a slight decline at GCE A level. Most students remain to the end of their courses but pass rates are below the SFC average. AS level success rates have remained static and below the SFC average for the past three years. In 2008/09 success rates for the substantial number of students on foundation courses improved to the high 2007/08 average and high grades for GCSE English language were well above average. High grade pass rates are consistently below the SFC average and high grades for GCSE mathematics declined to below the SFC average in 2008/09.
10. In 2007/08, the college achieved particularly high scores in contextual value-added. Other value added measures for 2007/08 show many students making good progress compared to their prior attainment. However, progress was inconsistent between subjects. Early data for 2008/09 show satisfactory progress with the same pattern of inconsistency. For example, students make outstanding progress in AS level chemistry but less progress in AS level business studies and sociology.
11. The college has succeeded in closing the achievement gaps between ethnic groups and between male and female students. Students receiving additional learning support achieve success rates at or above the college average as do those students attending extra workshops provided by the college.
12. Students' progression between levels of study is good and a high proportion of students studying AS levels progress to GCE A level. Most students progress to

higher or further education and employment on leaving the college. Students enjoy their learning and are well motivated to succeed. Attendance is satisfactory although it declined slightly in 2008/09. The development of economic and social well-being is satisfactory with most students progressing to education and employment. Students report that they feel safe and secure in the college and are confident that any bullying or harassment would be dealt with swiftly by the college. Students have the information they need to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the community and are involved with charitable events such as a well-supported fashion show.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

13. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall and some aspects are good. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory and were judged to be good in visual and performing arts. Most students participate well in lessons and make satisfactory or good progress in their studies. Students frequently develop good skills in areas including English and information technology. Students experiencing difficulties in lessons are often well supported and enabled to achieve satisfactory outcomes. The excellent new resources are used well to enhance students' learning. Students' work is assessed regularly and most receive helpful feedback on how to improve their work.
14. Lesson planning varies in quality. In the best examples, learning is planned carefully for the different needs of students; however, not all planning takes sufficient account of individual students' needs. In particular, the needs and possible extension activities for more able students need further development as do assessment activities to support students' progress. Whilst support for less able students is effective, not all lessons have sufficient challenge and drive to secure consistently good progress for all students, particularly the most able.
15. Joint observations by inspectors and college managers demonstrated well aligned findings; however, the majority of observations are carried out by external observers and college wide outcomes of observation do not always reflect student outcomes and progress. The observation scheme identifies successfully areas in which individual teachers could improve their skills but at present this information is not used sufficiently to share best practice and focus whole college improvement strategies sharply.
16. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. The wide range of courses from foundation to advanced level provides good opportunities for students to progress. The college works collaboratively with other post 16 providers to ensure it has a distinctive offer. It has led the local consortium working on the introduction of Diplomas.
17. The college has strong, productive partnerships, particularly with local schools, and it uses these to promote social inclusion and community cohesion very

- effectively. Satisfactory links are in place with local employers, who provide work placements for many of the students on vocational courses.
18. The college provides a satisfactory programme of cross college additional activities to enhance learners' progress and development. Students in curriculum areas such as visual and performing arts take part in a particularly good range of stimulating activities relevant to their subjects. However, there are too few opportunities in other areas.
 19. Care, guidance and support are good. The needs of learners are assessed accurately and support is arranged promptly. Support for welfare and financial issues are good, and students value the support they receive from the college mentor team.
 20. Information, advice and guidance about college courses are accessible and useful. The college works with other local post 16 providers to offer impartial advice on courses at all institutions.
 21. Specialist staff attend schools to assess the needs of applicants requiring additional support. Students progressing to higher education speak highly of the support they receive in making their applications. Good links are in place with local universities.
 22. Induction enables students to settle into their studies quickly. Assessment arrangements have been reviewed to more effectively identify and meet the literacy and numeracy skills of students. However, inspectors found that in science and mathematics, insufficient account was taken of the numeracy skills of applicants when agreeing course choices.
 23. Group tutorials are tailored to the needs and interests of students. Revised processes for the more timely and regular setting and monitoring of targets for students have been introduced in the current academic year but these have yet to be implemented fully.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

24. The principal, governors and senior management team are committed to providing open-access education for all students within a caring college community and this vision is shared by teachers and support staff. However, the college has yet to develop strategic objectives of sufficient clarity to enable college planners to reflect this vision in their work and plans are often insufficiently precise or lack appropriate targets. Performance management procedures are appropriate but not applied with sufficient rigour. Curriculum managers are not held sufficiently to account for their actions and personal performance targets are often too general to be of value. Staff are well qualified and experienced and there are encouraging signs that the new arrangements for the management of continuing professional development are

helping teachers develop skills that are appropriate to the college's priorities. Morale throughout the college is good.

25. Governance is satisfactory. Governors contribute a broad and appropriate range of skills to the college. They maintained effective oversight of the building project, which helped ensure that it was delivered ahead of time and within budget. Governors monitor the college's finances carefully but on occasions do not provide sufficient challenge to underperforming curriculum areas.
26. The promotion of safeguarding of learners is good. Policies and procedures for safeguarding young learners and vulnerable adults are well considered and appropriate to the specific needs of students. Risk assessment of learners is well developed and comprehensive. The college has good links with relevant agencies and is a member of the local children's safeguarding board (LCSB); the principal is a member of the Children's Trust. College staff are highly experienced at dealing with students and vulnerable adults who are experiencing severe disturbance in their lives and operate secure referral procedures. All staff has undergone training in safeguarding. The college conducts criminal record bureau (CRB) checks and has a single register of all staff directly employed by the college. Accident reporting is thorough.
27. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college recruits its students from diverse backgrounds so that each year students who are native speakers of some thirty different languages are represented in the student population. Governors and staff mirror this diversity. Teachers of minority ethnic heritage are strongly represented on the staff. The college celebrates diversity and promotes harmony and tolerance successfully. Complaints are monitored carefully to reduce the recurrence of problems; racist incidents are extremely rare. The monitoring of the performance of different groups of students is detailed and confirms that the difference in performance between male and female students has been eliminated and that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now achieving success rates at or above the college average. The college has a single equality scheme which includes recently updated policies relating to different groups of students and enables the college to meet its duties with regard to race and disability legislation. Policies are monitored appropriately, although the procedures for assessing their impact require further refinement. The new buildings have been designed to ensure that all students enjoy similar access to facilities and resources. The promotion and celebration of equality and diversity through college publications and teaching and learning are good.
28. The college makes satisfactory arrangements to listen to, gather and address the views of students. Cross-college and divisional surveys of student views are conducted frequently but sometimes they are not formally evaluated in sufficient detail to inform fully the college's quality improvement processes. Self-assessment is satisfactory but varies in quality between different curriculum areas. The college has graded the overall quality of teaching and learning over-generously but elsewhere judgements are mostly accurate.

Course reviews and action plans frequently lack rigour; actions stated are not challenging enough to promote speedy improvement.

29. Value for money is satisfactory as are students' attendance, teaching and learning and students' success rates. The excellent new buildings have an advanced information technology infrastructure and provide a wealth of features designed to encourage sustainability. Financial management is good and personnel functions are performed efficiently.

Subject areas

Science and mathematics

Grade 4

Context

30. The provision inspected did not cover all subjects included in the college's science and mathematics division. Psychology, physical education and health and social care were not part of the inspection.
31. There are currently 486 students studying science and mathematics on courses from foundation to advanced level. Most students are aged 16-18 and study full-time.

Key findings

- Overall, outcomes are inadequate. With the exception of AS level chemistry, pass rates are low on AS level courses. The pass rates on AS level mathematics and science courses over the last 3 years were all below the sixth form college (SFC) national average, although AS level chemistry was slightly above the SFC national average in 2008/09. In particular, although pass rates on AS level biology and physics improved in 2008/09, they remain significantly below the SFC average.
- High grade pass rates on GCSE mathematics have declined for the past three years. College data show the high grade pass rate has declined to significantly below the SFC national average in 2008/09.
- Students achieved 100% pass rates on GCE A level chemistry and GCE A level mathematics courses for the last two years. AS level mathematics courses and AS level chemistry courses have had outstanding value-added scores for the past three years.
- The range of provision is good. It includes numeracy level 1 and 2 courses, GCSE mathematics at foundation and higher tiers, GCSE science, additional science and separate sciences, GCE A level and AS level mathematics, GCE A level and AS level sciences and BTEC national certificate in science.
- Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory and provide students with a good range of different learning activities. The activities in the lessons observed during the inspection included science practical, paired and group work, matching activities, use of graph plotting software and use of computer animations. However, lessons frequently have insufficient challenge and drive, and learning is not always planned to meet the varying needs of individual students.

- Additional literacy and numeracy support is available but students do not always take advantage of this support.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The actions taken by managers to rectify issues of student achievement, particularly on AS level courses, have been insufficiently effective and timely. In 2009/10 the college raised entry requirements to AS levels and students are now offered alternative BTEC courses, however, it is too early to judge the impact of these measures on student achievements.
- Targets for the improvement of teaching and learning are imprecise and insufficiently focused on key areas. It is often unclear how the completion of the targets is to be monitored, by whom and when and how outcomes are to be measured.

What does Gateway Sixth Form College need to do to improve further?

- To implement quality assurance consistently so that all staff understand where performance needs to be improved and plan focused and appropriate remedial actions.
- To ensure all students have appropriate challenging targets and teachers adapt their teaching to help meet them.
- To provide sufficiently challenging learning activities to ensure that all students reach their full potential.

Visual and performing arts

Grade 2

Context

32. Some 550 students study visual and performing arts and media from foundation to advanced level. The majority of students are aged 16-18. Just over half of all students are on vocational BTEC awards and certificates with the remainder studying GCE A level and AS level subjects.

Key findings

- Students make good progress. Many students have low prior attainment on entry to the college; however, most make good progress and achieve well beyond what might be expected given their starting points. For example, in 2008/09 students in AS level graphic design and certificate in media and AS level film all made excellent progress when compared to their starting points. Students make good progress in lessons
- Standards of work are good. Students in performing arts acting produced high quality devised work in which they showed skill in the exploration of character through the effective use of voice and movement. Students in art and design and media create interesting work using a range of media
- Success rates improved to just below the high sixth form college (SFC) national averages in 2007/8. However there was a decline in 2008/9 particularly at level 2. On many courses, although students were retained well, lower pass rates were responsible for the decline
- Vocational students benefit from well constructed assignments that build both workplace and personal skills very effectively. For instance, in a music technology lesson the students were encouraged effectively to practise professional standards in their use of the recording studio.
- Teaching and learning are good in many lessons. Teachers manage learning well, providing students with a wide range of learning experiences that develop understanding, knowledge and personal competence. Teachers use information learning technology (ILT) well and provide excellent resources for learning. However, in some lessons the more able students are not sufficiently challenged.
- The range of provision is good. Students can choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses in visual and performing arts and media from foundation to advanced level. Students make good use of the progression routes with some impressive examples of students progressing from foundation level to higher education. Managers have been successful in tailoring the curriculum to meet student needs more effectively.

- Teachers provide an extensive range of highly inclusive enrichment activities that develop a wide range of students' personal and practical skills. Some projects have successfully broken down social and cultural barriers. The fashion show is a very good example of how a wide range of students come together to celebrate their work and achievements.
- Managers have not yet set a clearly defined strategy for the whole department. Some course reviews are not sufficiently judgemental and are not well supported by sufficient evidence.

What does Gateway College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of self assessment by incorporating a greater range of evidence including the analysis of the views of students
- Interrogate more closely the reasons for the decline in success rates for 2008/09 in order to identify accurately appropriate actions for improvement
- Review teaching methods to ensure that all students, particularly the most able, are being sufficiently challenged to reach their full potential

Information about the inspection

33. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's vice-principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
34. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Gateway Sixth Form College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	1275	1275
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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 Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009