

Inspection of Gateway Sixth Form College

Inspection dates: 8–11 October 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Gateway Sixth Form College is based in the outskirts of Leicester. It draws students from across the city and the county of Leicestershire. Unlike many sixth-form colleges, it has, in addition to A-level students, a large number of students following vocational programmes. The college offers programmes from level 1 to level 3. At the time of the inspection, it had 1,214 students. Of these, 232 were studying A-level programmes, 646 were studying vocational programmes at level 3, 250 were studying vocational programmes at level 2 and 86 were studying vocational programmes at entry level or level 1. 46 students with high needs were studying at the college. Of these, 17 were studying academic and/or vocational programmes. The remaining 29 were studying programmes for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Most students enjoy studying at the college. They offer favourable comparisons between college and their experiences at school. Students enjoy positive and productive relationships with each other and with their teachers.

The large majority of students are very happy with the education they receive. Many say that college staff go beyond their expectations and provide extra help and support before, during and after lessons. They are especially positive about GCSE English and mathematics. A small number of students are less happy and learn less than they might.

Most students benefit from good preparation for their next steps. Teachers understand what students are likely to do after college, and they help them to develop their study skills alongside relevant subject knowledge.

Students have good opportunities to participate in additional activities. This enriches their experiences and helps them to broaden their knowledge outside of their subjects. A high proportion of students participate in useful work experience that helps them to develop their confidence.

Students feel safe at college. They have good relationships with teachers and security staff and feel able to report concerns.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have created a more aspirational culture in the college since the previous inspection. They have improved the curriculum so that students study coherent programmes. They have increased the expectations all staff have of what students can achieve. They have provided training that has enhanced teachers' subject knowledge and their teaching skills. As a result, teachers now reflect on and share their practice, and revise their plans, methods and resources to improve the quality of their work. Most teachers now challenge students to reach their full potential. They focus more on what it is they are preparing students for, and they prepare them well.

Most teachers have good subject expertise that they use well to enliven their teaching. Their planning enables students to progressively build their understanding in a coherent and logical sequence, and they explain topics clearly. This helps students to understand challenging concepts. In a business studies lesson, for example, the teacher explained monetary and fiscal policy well so that a group of level 2 students understood it. In a few subjects, teachers do not consider carefully enough the skills students need for their next steps, the best order in which to present information and, on occasion, how to teach concepts and skills effectively.

Teachers teach a range of additional things beyond qualifications to prepare students for further study, employment and their lives in general. For example, in English lessons, teachers focus closely on reading in class not only as a means of developing vocabulary and writing skills, but also to encourage students to read more.

Teachers increasingly provide students with opportunities to improve their ability to recall and apply knowledge and skills, through frequent practice and testing. Where students have not yet developed the required understanding, most teachers provide further opportunities for them to learn. Teachers do not always provide feedback that is sufficiently precise or ensure that students act on feedback to develop their knowledge and skills further.

Staff ensure that students with high needs benefit just as much as other students from good-quality education. Staff work well with students and their families to make the transition to college as easy as possible. Managers ensure that additional funding for these students is spent wisely and that links with external agencies are used well. Staff plan well for the specific needs of these students to ensure that they are able to participate fully in lessons.

As a result of the much improved planning and teaching, students pass their qualifications and gain better grades than might be expected given their starting points. This enables a high proportion of level 2 learners to move on to, and be successful in, level 3 courses. The vast majority of level 3 students now go to university.

Students who undertake English and mathematics GCSEs achieve exceptionally well. Almost all students on level 2 and level 3 programmes take GCSEs in English and mathematics if they do not already have a grade 4 or better. Almost all improve their grades and the proportion who improve from a grade 3 to a grade 4 is substantially higher than in many other colleges.

Students behave very well, attend well and have a positive attitude towards their studies. They make a substantial contribution to the calm, orderly learning environment. They participate fully in lessons and demonstrate resilience in the face of challenges. In many subjects, students produce neat and well-presented work. Learners are supportive of each other. For example, in class they frequently provide respectful and valuable analysis of each other's contributions.

Managers and teachers have devised a programme of additional activities that provides well for learners' broader development, including helping them to be physically and mentally healthy. They provide opportunities for students to volunteer, participate in sports and fitness activities, and take part in wider activities such as art therapy.

Students receive good information about higher education and careers to help them make sensible decisions about their next steps. For example, professional artists frequently visit art classes to help prepare students for university and art-related careers.

Although managers have developed a tutorial programme that includes themes related to British values, many students do not develop a deep understanding of how these values relate to either their course or the wider world.

Governors understand the best and less well performing subject areas of the college and are fully supportive of the improvement actions of senior leaders. However, they do not do enough to challenge leaders or to drive improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Students feel safe and are safe. Managers ensure appropriate procedures and policies are in place, and that staff are appropriately trained. In addition, staff work closely with local agencies, including the police and the local authority, to provide additional services. For example, staff have collaborated with Leicester Police Knife Crime Delivery Group to produce a film on knife crime, which is now used nationally. However, staff do not do enough to develop students' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, their understanding of these topics is limited.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should work with staff in information technology and health and social care to develop a clear understanding of what students need to know for their next steps, to understand how best to sequence learning, and to develop their teaching skills.
- Leaders and managers should work with staff to help them develop their understanding of how to use feedback most effectively.
- Leaders, managers and staff should work with students to ensure they understand British values and the threats posed by those with radical and extremist views.
- Governors should provide leaders and managers with greater challenge and take a more active role in driving further improvements at the college.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130755
Address	Colin Grundy Drive Leicester Leicestershire LE5 1GA
Contact number	0116 274 4500
Website	www.gateway.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	James Bagley
Provider type	Sixth-form college
Date of previous inspection	16–19 January 2018
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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