

Abbeygate Sixth Form College

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	147063
Name of lead inspector:	Sambit Sen, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Sixth-form college
Address:	Beetons Way Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP33 3YU

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Ofsted undertakes to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of education programmes for young people within the further education and skills sector. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Abbeygate Sixth Form College is part of Suffolk Academies Trust, located in the heart of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. The sixth-form centre was established in 2019. It offers A-level qualifications to students in Bury St Edmunds and within the wider area of Suffolk. Abbeygate Sixth Form College currently has 750 students studying 33 A-level subjects and one applied vocational qualification. The most popular A-level subjects are biology, chemistry, law, psychology and sociology.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant education programmes that have a clearly defined purpose? Significant progress

Leaders and managers have developed a highly effective curriculum to enable students to achieve their aspiration to go to university and into employment. Student numbers have trebled. This is because leaders have responded swiftly to the demand for local access to high-quality education.

Leaders and managers recruit staff who are knowledgeable and well qualified in their subject specialisms. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use this skilfully to encourage and promote student enjoyment and enthusiasm for their A-level subjects. For example, in psychology, teachers carefully plan their lessons to allow students to share their ideas and to build a common understanding of key new technical terms relating to theories of learning. This helps students to build on their knowledge and learn new and complex technical concepts quickly and be enthusiastic about their lessons.

Managers and teachers monitor students' progress effectively throughout their time at the college. Students' progress is regularly discussed. Where necessary, swift action is taken to prevent students from falling behind. Consequently, students are given effective support that enables them to achieve their intended destinations once they have completed their studies.

Nearly all students either secure a place with their first-choice university or go into employment. Staff provide effective careers education to students. Through the curriculum content and tutorials, students are well informed about their potential next steps. Students are encouraged to complete relevant extended projects to help them in their future applications for higher education and employment.

Governors challenge and support leaders and managers effectively. They have a good understanding of the college and the locality. They are ambitious for the sixth-form college to best serve local communities. Governors challenge senior leaders to continue to improve the quality of teaching that students experience. This ensures that students enjoy their lessons and progress through their qualifications quickly.

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality education programmes for young people that prepare them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals? Significant progress

Teachers use their extensive subject knowledge to prepare well-sequenced lessons and resources that consider students' prior learning effectively. In art, Year 12 students build an awareness of different artists' use of colours and how these are created in the palette. Students build on this knowledge in Year 13 as they move on to recreate the original colours and techniques of artists in their own work. This supports students to remember important knowledge in subjects they study. As a result, students are prepared well for their end-of-course examinations.

Teachers effectively create a positive and nurturing learning environment at the college. They quickly establish professional and supportive relationships with students. Students appreciate the strong sense of personal responsibility and greater independence they are given. They value the mutual respect shown by both teachers and their peers. As a result, students demonstrate good behaviour and work hard to achieve their personal goals.

Over time, students successfully build their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Visual arts students use activities such as online research, visits to galleries and attending life-drawing classes in the evenings to gain insights into their own creative work. This helps students make significant progress towards their future career plans.

As a result of teachers' frequent and effective feedback, students know how well they are achieving against their personal targets and how they can improve further. Students receive thorough and detailed feedback on their assessments. In mathematics, students know what they need to practise in understanding new and complex concepts. In art, teachers listen thoughtfully to students' ideas. Teachers' suggestions enable students to understand how they can translate ideas into practice.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Significant progress

Leaders ensure that students are safe at the college. Students know how to keep themselves and others safe. They are confident that teachers will take swift action where necessary, should they raise any concerns.

Students benefit from highly effective tutorials. Pertinent topics include recognising that someone may add drugs to your drink without your knowledge or permission, and the dangers posed by county lines activity.

Staff are well trained to help with mental health issues among the students and staff. Staff have access to dedicated counsellors and specialist NHS clinical psychologists to deal with any specific support required.

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