

Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	1155459
Name of lead inspector:	Steve Battersby, His Majesty's Inspector
Inspection dates:	13 and 14 November 2024
Type of provider:	General further education college
Address:	Cranford Avenue Weymouth Dorset DT4 7LQ

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College was established on the 1 August 2024, through the merger of Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College. The college has two campuses: Weymouth, which offers a comprehensive range of academic and vocational courses, and Kingston Maurward, which primarily teaches land-based and environmental courses, alongside several other vocational subjects.

Weymouth College's most recent inspection took place in March 2020, when inspectors judged the college to be good. The last inspection of Kingston Maurward College, in May 2022, judged all key judgements as good, with the exception of the provision for students with high needs, which was judged as requires improvement. The purpose of this monitoring visit was to review the progress that governors, leaders, managers and staff have made since the merger and since receiving the recommendations from the previous Kingston Maurward College inspection.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in establishing a cohesive vision and culture in the newly merged college?

Significant progress

Leaders and governors have used their experience and knowledge very effectively to establish a strong foundation for the merger. They have taken two distinct colleges, each with its own strengths, challenges and identities, and have swiftly worked towards creating a unified organisation. Leaders and governors have worked closely with staff to ensure that the process remains collaborative, with decisions focused on what is best for students, staff and the community.

Leaders have used excellent communication strategies effectively since the merger. Staff receive briefings and emails from the interim principal to keep them up dated. All communication regarding the new college occurs simultaneously across both campuses to ensure that staff receive a consistent message. Employees value greatly the honest, open and consistent management approach adopted by senior leaders. Staff appreciate the transparency and frequent updates, which keep them informed and up to date on the progress with the new college. This means trust between leaders and staff has been established quickly. Any barriers that may have arisen, such as feeling out of place at a different campus compared to their usual work environment, have been swiftly alleviated.

Leaders and staff have made both significant and sustainable progress in a very short time. Leaders have established a strong sense of a whole=college community very quickly. Staff feel that the merger is being implemented with their involvement rather than being imposed on them. At the beginning of the merger, leaders took

swift action to review important matters such as safeguarding and health and safety to ensure fully aligned procedures.

What progress have leaders made in establishing cohesive and highly effective governance arrangements for the newly merged college?

Significant progress

Before the formal merger, leaders completed an extensive selection process for the new board, primarily involving members from the two existing governing bodies. This procedure included an application process, professional discussion, and a skills assessment. The aim was to ensure that the newly merged college board was well-equipped for its responsibilities from the outset. Governors are experts from a variety of sectors, which provides a diverse range of skills necessary for the future aspirations of the college. There are members with knowledge of human resources and specialists from the land-based industries.

At the very start of the merger, there was a full review of the governance processes and systems. Governors agreed that this was essential to ensure a fresh start and to avoid any legacy matters from the two separate colleges. The first board meeting was held early in August, providing an opportunity for building constructive relationships, and to establish a positive way forward. Governors challenge and support senior leaders effectively. This was very evident during the early days when difficult decisions needed to be taken in the best interests of the newly merged college. This has helped to ensure a highly effective start to the new college.

What progress have leaders made in developing curriculums for the newly merged college that closely aligns with learners' aspirations and prepares them for their next stage in education, training, or employment?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have a thorough understanding of the demographics in the areas that each campus serves. They are beginning to plan accordingly. They are very positive about the new college, recognising the importance of celebrating differences as well as the opportunities to develop their curriculums. Managers appreciate the guidance from leaders and value the autonomy they have to make informed decisions regarding the future possibilities.

Leaders rapidly formed an effective operational group at the college. Curriculum and support managers meet weekly to ensure a unified vision for the future. During these meetings, curriculum managers use their time productively to collaborate and establish best practice. Managers and lecturers are rightly excited about the opportunities the merger has created to enhance the student experience. For example, at the Kingston Maurward campus, outdoor adventure students are organising high ropes activities for students in protected services and sports from the Weymouth campus. Additionally, the animal park staff at Kingston Maurward have

invited the creative industry students from Weymouth to photograph the animals and use the extensive grounds to enrich their portfolios.

Leaders have plans in place to enhance the curriculums across both campuses. This will ensure that learners have access to additional experiences in areas they may not typically encounter or be aware of. For example, students at Kingston Maurward will have the opportunity to participate in sailing activities at Portland. This initiative will allow students to develop new skills or improve existing ones, better preparing them for their next steps. While leaders and managers have made a positive start to curriculum design, it is still too early to assess the full impact on students and apprentices.

What progress have leaders made to improve the quality of education and careers information advice and guidance for students who study on programmes specially designed for those with high needs at the newly merged college.

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection at Kingston Maurward college, leaders and managers have taken effective action to improve the quality of education and careers advice and guidance for students with high needs who are on specialised programmes. The curriculum has been redesigned to provide an individualised approach that meets students' needs and aligns closely with their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets. Leaders have developed a structured package of careers advice and guidance, which helps students with high needs build the confidence and resilience necessary to make progress, become more independent or secure employment.

Since the merger, leaders and managers allocate time for staff to share best practice between the two campuses. Managers support lecturers well and help them to meet the needs of the students learners in their class. Managers have established a consistent approach to the teaching, learning and support high needs learners receive. For example, managers share EHC plan outcomes with lecturers and support staff, from which they create a support plan. Because they are familiar with the support needs of each learner, both lecturers and support staff are able to provide feedback on the progress learners make towards the EHC plan outcomes.

Leaders use effective quality processes, such as learning walks, with targeted questions focused on teaching students with high needs. This practice is becoming standardised across both campuses, allowing for better oversight of the quality of education these learners receive. Leaders now conduct weekly meetings with heads of departments, which help identify strengths and weaknesses that inform themes for staff training.

Leaders have clear plans in place to make sure students with high needs on each campus benefit from a well-structured and individualised programme so that they are able to achieve their targets and move on to their next steps in education or employment.

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 looked after children, 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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024