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Mr S Kitchener
Principal
Luton Sixth Form College
Bradgers Hill Road
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Dear Mr Kitchener

Ofsted 2010–11 best practice survey: value for money in colleges

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and learners, during my visit on 4 November 2010 to look at work in securing and developing best value for money.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in value for money in colleges. The publication will include case studies about individual providers. If your college is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment prior to publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included scrutiny of documentation and meetings with senior managers and learners.

Features of best practice

- Learners' outcomes are good overall, and outstanding for many subjects, and the progress of learners relative to their prior qualifications and experience is very good.
- The college's curriculum is reviewed regularly and includes evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes. Detailed course-costing procedures are carried out, for example when considering whether to continue to run the International Baccalaureate course. Decisive management actions are taken to improve value for money, while ensuring that the college's values and equity issues are met.
- The college serves an ethnically diverse area and its inclusive admissions policy, with lower than average GCSE entry scores for all courses, helps to

widen participation to learners from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Strong collaboration with other sixth form colleges through the CENBASE partnership enables successful and relevant staff training and the sharing of good practice to take place in a cost-effective manner.
- The resources are managed very well, enabling more effective use of college facilities and providing better value for money. For example, extending the length of the college day has made better use of accommodation, including students' social space, and allowed more efficient utilisation of staff teaching time.
- A major capital project was managed carefully and the move to a new campus took place within budget and on schedule.
- Excellent financial management has enabled continued investment in resources to support students, while achieving efficiency gains to balance college budgets.

Area for development

- Take the opportunity to develop more innovative and cost-effective methods of teaching and learning, using the new accommodation and resources now available to staff and students.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop your approaches to securing value for money in your college.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tony Noonan
Her Majesty's Inspector