

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



14 January 2011

Ms S Flannery
Principal
St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
10 Malwood Road
London
SW12 8EN

Dear Ms Flannery

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 11 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, other staff and students.

Features of best practice

- Students make excellent progress relative to their prior attainment and achieve high success rates. A very high proportion of the large numbers of students applying for university are successful.
- The efficient and effective deployment of staff. Teachers and support staff are flexible in their working practices. The organisation of curriculum and entitlement provision ensures that contact time with students is optimised during the academic year.
- Very effective partnership work takes place with other Catholic sixth form colleges with similar cohorts of students. This collaboration enables staff to share good practice in curriculum management and teaching and learning in a relevant and cost-effective manner.
- Staff training is highly effective and provides good value for money. Joint training sessions are run with staff from partner institutions and many staff attend events where costs are minimal, including college-run sessions and those organised by examination boards.

- Managers and staff take the concerns of students very seriously. Suggestions by students are considered carefully and action is taken where appropriate to improve the quality of the students' experience, without incurring excessive additional costs. For example, extending the opening hours of the learning resource centre during the early evening.
- Performance indicators, including finance and resources parameters, are benchmarked with other similar providers. Managers use this information to make a realistic comparison of costs and take actions where their expenditure seems out-of-step with other providers.
- For over 10 years, the college has run part-time, short programmes for adults. This community education provision covers a wide range of courses, including languages, dance, digital photography and floristry. The programmes meet the demand from the local community for courses offering challenge and progression within the context of learning for pleasure. In 2009/10, some 1,691 adults participated, with all courses running on a break-even principle for costs.

Areas for development

- Further develop the understanding of middle managers on issues relating to funding and costs at course level to enhance professional development.
- Continue to review the current organisational structure of the college to ensure line management arrangements and pastoral and academic structures are streamlined and clear 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 explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tony Noonan
Her Majesty's Inspector