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Ms E Rushton  
Principal  
West Herts College  
Watford Campus  
Hempstead Road  
Watford  
WD17 3EZ

Dear Ms Rushton

### **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 14 October 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 before publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: scrutiny of success rate data for 2008/09, the most recent inspection report, and the 2008/09 self-assessment report; a demonstration and sampling of the college management information system; meetings with key managers and leaders in the college; and a meeting of a representative group of learners.

#### **Features of good practice**

- Highly effective and successful governance, leadership and management ensure that the quality of the learner experience is central and is the key focus in driving forward and achieving the strategic and operational aims and objectives.
- Very high-quality college data and quality processes inform planning, monitoring and decision-making. Managers and teachers assess in-year progress and performance weekly so that prompt actions can be taken where necessary and good practice can be shared. Additional targeted support for learners identified as underachieving is reviewed regularly to assess its impact and effectiveness.

- Very strong financial and resource management, with close monitoring of budgets and course, teaching and room usage hours, ensure the efficient and effective use of resources across the college.
- A wide range of methods enables learners to share their views and experiences at college, including meetings with senior managers. This, in addition to the speed at which actions to generate improvements are put in place, results in high levels of learner satisfaction. Managers across the college are encouraged to talk to learners informally and follow up any concerns they may have.
- Staff involve learners directly in decisions which have an impact on the quality of their experiences at college. Examples include: contributing to college planning by designing small group and social spaces; selecting a catering contractor for the new college building; and helping to appoint new teachers.
- Teaching, learning and support are of a high quality as a result of: very effective and targeted development activities; close monitoring of teachers' performance, which includes learner feedback; and by enhancing further the skills of teachers who already perform well.
- The college is committed to developing learners' skills through a set of core competencies, including English, mathematics, information technology and learning and thinking skills, so that each learner is better prepared to achieve their main qualification, to progress to the next level of study within the college and to enter employment.

### **Areas for development**

None identified.

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. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Paula Heaney**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**