

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Ms G Worgan
Principal
West Herts College
Watford Campus
Hempstead Road
Watford

Dear Ms Worgan

Ofsted 2011/12 best practice survey: supporting college students to progress and achieve

Thank you for your warm welcome and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 6 and 7 February 2012 to look at your work in supporting students to progress and achieve.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in supporting college students. 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, support staff and students.

Features of good practice observed

- The college's strong strategic focus on progress, attainment and enrichment activities which helps students the significant majority of students to stay at the college and achieve good results. Staff place great emphasis on developing the skills and experience of students outside of lessons through an extensive programme of enrichment activities
- Resources are deployed in a highly effective way. The college tailors academic and pastoral support appropriately to meet identified needs and priorities. All activities are monitored closely to ensure value for money is obtained.

- A clear and effective admissions procedure identifies the needs of students well and recognises those who are potentially at risk of underperforming so that support procedures can be arranged at an early stage of the course.
- Staff link very effectively with relevant external partners, particularly to support the most vulnerable students. Staff intervene rapidly and effectively when necessary to provide appropriate academic and pastoral support to help students to progress and achieve.
- The high-quality support provided by the college is very effectively integrated into curriculum delivery. It benefits from close and successful collaboration between teaching and support staff which helps 'at risk' students to progress and achieve and it challenges the more able students to maximise their progress.
- The college uses a comprehensive electronic reporting system which is highly effective in monitoring and managing the performance and progress of students. The system is used regularly and efficiently throughout the college and is accessible to all relevant staff and students as well as senior managers and leaders.
- The college provides a wide range of student-focused enrichment activities and staff use innovative strategies to successfully engage and involve students.
- High-quality facilities are provided by the college, which are used well and are much appreciated by students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making more consistent use of the new Independent Work Environment projects across the college to better develop the employability and personal skills of all students.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your approaches to providing support for your students. As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**Linda Truscott HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector**