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Mr G Wilkinson  
Principal and Chief Executive  
Kendal College  
Milnthorpe Road  
Kendal  
Cumbria  
LA9 5AY

Dear Mr Wilkinson

### **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 27 and 28 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 clear and holistic approach to the continuous development of student support services provides value for money and plays a significant role in helping students to stay on their courses and achieve very well.
- Highly committed and enthusiastic staff provide extensive academic and pastoral support that is valued extremely highly by students.
- A well-established personal tutor role, carried out by teachers, enables the progress of students to be monitored closely and regularly. A comprehensive, easy-to-use electronic system is very effective in recording and tracking the students' performance and progress.
- The new group tutorial programme 'review for success' is beginning to have a positive impact on students' personal and social development,

including their ability to evaluate their own performance and their skills in setting specific academic and personal goals.

- Students greatly value the very high-quality, realistic work environment and they have very good opportunities to engage in real work settings outside the college. For example, in catering, the student culinary team supervises and provides the catering at high profile external events realistically and reflects industry team working. The student construction team built bus shelters around the town and engage in other community projects. Funds from these activities support the students on international field study trips which provide supervisory experience for level 3 students
- Excellent opportunities exist for students to be involved in vocationally relevant trips, competitions and other events, including highly successful entries to the 'World Skills' event. For example, the college's 'augmented reality installation' project has already received both national and international acclaim.
- Extensive support for progression to university results in a high proportion of students entering higher education. The college's newly introduced tutorial programme has a strong focus on equipping students with high-quality employability skills. A full-time manager focuses successfully in re-engaging those young people not in education, employment or training.
- Robust quality assurance procedures ensure that students' progress is monitored closely, that targets set for individual students are specific and measurable, and that tutorials are delivered to the high standard expected by the college. Very good and systematic use is made of student feedback to inform actions for improvement in student services.
- High-quality accommodation is provided, and staff give close attention to sustainability in all aspects of the college's work. The college's latest developments, including the new catering restaurant with Art Gallery and the new theatre, are fine examples of the college's commitment to raising students' aspirations through the provision of World Class work environments.
- A strong focus on students' safety incorporates bright social spaces that offer a safe and welcoming environment for studying.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- continuing to fully evaluate the revised group tutorial arrangements and the impact of these on other aspects of student support, including individual tutorials, to ensure that the existing high quality provision is not jeopardised.

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

**Josephine Nowacki**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**