

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



12 March 2012

Mr S Criddle  
Principal  
South Devon College  
Vantage Point  
Long Road  
Paignton  
Devon  
TQ4 7EJ

Dear Mr Criddle

**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 29 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**

- Strong leadership provides a clear and well directed focus on efficiency and value for money in deploying resources to support students. The college has used its resources in a creative and flexible manner to meet the needs of its students.
- The college has a strong focus on curriculum design and development to meet the needs of its students at all levels. It has a wide curriculum offer with various admission points. Thorough planning in advance of funding reductions has ensured that tutorial entitlement has been enhanced

through a carefully constructed college wide tutorial programme. Many of the tutorial units offer opportunities for accreditation and the acquisition of additional awards

- Students receive excellent support for the development of their personal, social and employability skills through well structured and meticulously reinforced tutorial sessions and well designed and engaging themed weeks. Many students are inspired to take up opportunities to volunteer and to support community and college based activities. The college places a high priority on developing the personal and social skills of learners.
- Arrangements for supporting students are highly integrated and effective. A high profile is given to the college's "Helpzone team" early in the recruitment process. This is further reinforced through the central location of the team in the college and the effective links with other key college staff. Tutorial and support staff are very enthusiastic and well trained. Communication is strong between college staff and with parents.
- The college makes particularly effective use of technology to support students. Its Moodle system is used in a wide range of creative ways. Students and their tutors use the college's Learner Engagement and Progression (LEAP) system very successfully to set targets and review progress. A contact log records meaningful information about individual interventions and alerts support staff to students who may be at-risk of non completion. A wide range of well crafted and interactive resources support the delivery of tutorials.
- Recruitment procedures are rigorous and focussed strongly on the needs of students. Parents and carers are involved closely from the outset. Support needs are identified early and support is put in place in a timely manner. Staff identify students' individual goals and aspirations at a very early stage in their course and these are reviewed regularly against progress so that the college can respond quickly and support development needs.
- The well-structured "Positive Intervention" system places a strong emphasis on early supportive intervention. Referral systems are clear and tutors are given very good guidance about how and when to refer students for support. The college is very responsive in meeting students' needs in an appropriate and timely manner.
- Links with external agencies are strong and effective. Key local and national organisations are used well at regular college events and they play an important role in college life. External links are very effective in further supporting students outside of college.
- The strong college ethos of continuous improvement is supported by successful arrangements for monitoring performance and quality assurance procedures. It sets high expectations of both staff and students. Monitoring of attendance, retention and success is regular and rigorous and makes very good use of the college's effective electronic systems to improve.

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

- further developing the use of technology among all staff to ensure that the highest standards set by the college are met.

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**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**