

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 A Clynch
Principal
Loreto College
Chichester Road
Hulme
Manchester
M15 5PB

Dear Ms Clynch

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

Thank you for your very warm welcome and for your cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 12 and 13 March 2012 to look at your work in supporting students to progress and achieve. I should be grateful if you would pass on my appreciation to Charles for organising the hospitality and for making the arrangements for the two days; all went very smoothly.

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 eLoreto, observation of a tutorial and meetings with senior and middle managers, tutors and students.

Features of good practice observed:

- Teachers and tutors have a very significant commitment to promoting students' progress through frequent encouragement. This helps them to have high expectations and many attain beyond normal expectations.
- The very effective and successful supplementary lessons, covering skills-study sessions and supervised study periods, enable teachers to support students in many different ways to overcome their challenges and to progress well.

- Staff have a very important emphasis on helping students who have low achievements to be retained in education, to progress to higher levels of study and to succeed with much higher achievements, thus raising their self esteem and value to society.
- Tutors have considerable determination and provide a very high quality tutorial experience for their students. They adapt the very comprehensive tutorial resources to meet the needs of their tutor groups, which inspires students to work harder and progress further.
- Exceptional and successful partnerships with the Manchester Catholic Education Partnership (MANCEP) and the Greater Manchester Higher Achievement Partnership (GMHAP) unite schools and colleges to share best practice, enable staff to improve the range and quality of provision and encourage students to stay in education and to progress to higher education.
- Students have very good involvement in tutorials, presenting their own tutorials on chosen topics and proposing and participating in their own enrichment activities.
- The overarching ethos of the college promotes educational and social inclusion very effectively. It considers the holistic needs and abilities of each student by providing very strong support for each one's academic and pastoral development.
- You show significant inspiration and motivation to raise teachers' and tutors' aspirations for their students and to promote the celebration of their successes.
- The college's many activities, including tutorials, enrichment activities, pastoral support and feedback to students, are very effective in enabling the great majority of students to attain at much higher levels and standards than their prior attainment would suggest.
- The dual role of teacher and tutor has a very valuable impact on improving the progress of students. Tutors act as an intermediary and as the advocate for students with their teachers and vice versa, realising areas of concern and risk and resolving them very promptly in order to facilitate students' exceptional progress.
- The eLoreto system is a very useful and potentially very powerful 'markbook' which staff and students like using, which provides much information about each student's current attainment and progress and which motivates students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing attendance and retention rates in a minority of enrichment activities and improving students' punctuality in general.

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

Shaun Dillon
Her Majesty's Inspector