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12 March 2012

Mrs S Flannery
Principal
St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
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Dear Mrs Flannery

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 March 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

- A strong commitment from senior managers, governors and staff ensures that students receive a well-rounded education in a Catholic ethos that takes into account their academic and personal needs.
- Effective curriculum planning ensures that, in addition to subject lessons, appropriate time is allocated to religious and ethical studies as well as strong care, guidance and support.
- Well-developed information learning technology (ILT) resources and support for staff facilitate the effective tracking and monitoring of students' progress.

- The well-established tutorial and pastoral system provide students with high-quality support and a programme of interesting and relevant activities.
- Very good communication between teachers, pastoral staff, students and parents supports students and helps them progress.
- Good enrichment activities enthuse and interest students and allow them to have fun. Students' participation rates in organised enrichment activities are high and they speak very positively about these activities.
- Challenging projects encourage students to collaborate with each other, to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding, and to make positive contributions to the lives of other people and the local community.
- Extensive support and activities, including an imaginative range of high-quality ILT resources, help students to complete written assignments and plan their progression to higher or further education and employment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- analysing the outcomes from the observation of tutorials in order to inform quality improvement and to identify any professional-development activities for tutors
- working with personal tutors and students to ensure that the rigour and specificity of students' subject targets are reflected and monitored in the learning plans developed during tutorial reviews.

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

Alex Falconer
Her Majesty's Inspector