

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



11 April 2012

Ms S Mbubaegbu
Principal
Highbury College
Tudor Crescent
Cosham, Portsmouth
PO6 2SA

Dear Ms Mbubaegbu

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

- A strong strategic focus is placed on ensuring the success of students and developing their employability skills.
- Students are prepared very well for progression to higher-level courses and employment through effective information, advice and guidance, and well-planned individual progress review meetings near the end of their courses.
- The highly inclusive atmosphere and student-focussed approach of staff ensures that Highbury is a 'college for everyone', coupled with understanding and knowledge of the local community and student population.

- Effective use is made of electronic personal learning plans. Target setting and reviews of students' progress are integral to lesson planning and are used very effectively to provide extra challenge to students. Students are highly committed to the process and contribute to setting their own targets and carry out peer assessment of fellow students.
- Well-integrated systems for quality improvement are in place, with strong emphasis on performance management. All staff, including business and support staff, agree that targets for success and the quality of provision is reviewed well through observation of tutorials, 'college sweeps' and feedback from staff and students.
- Highly effective college procedures identify a range of categories which indicate students may be at risk of failure on their courses. Well-tailored and early intervention by staff ensures that at-risk students are identified quickly and appropriate support is organised quickly.
- The 'Support to Achieve' programme is highly effective. Well-trained and accessible mentors have a clearly identified role which is understood by all. They provide excellent support for at-risk and vulnerable students which helps them to stay on their courses and be successful.
- Strong and well-established links with a wide range of relevant external agencies are very effective in providing essential pastoral support to students, particularly the most vulnerable. College staff play a key role in maintaining these support networks.
- The college has a creative approach to deploying limited resources to maximum effect. It has developed high-quality online learning resources and has made greater use of social enterprise projects and college-wide events to support students on their course.
- The extensive range of enrichment activities is well promoted and accessible to all. Students appreciate the extensive opportunities to improve their confidence, personal and employability skills, and make a positive contribution to the community through employment, college and community activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- regularly reviewing the content and usefulness of group tutorial sessions to ensure that they are relevant and that they meet the needs of the older students in the group
- further sharpening the individual targets of students, particularly for those on GCE A-level programmes.

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