

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



08 December 2006

Mr Sid Hughes
Principal
Newham Sixth Form College
Prince Regent Lane
London
E13 8BR

Dear Mr Hughes

Ofsted Survey Programme 2006/07

Aspect: The contribution made by CoVEs to the development of vocational work, including preparation for the specialised 14-19 diplomas, in schools.

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 13 November 2006. I am particularly grateful to Clare Connor and her staff for their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to other staff who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey into CoVEs' work with schools. Where published reports cite specific aspects of good practice it is usual practice to name the colleges involved. However, where reports identify common issues which represent barriers to progress, individual colleges will not be named.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen and to suggest some areas for development. These are reported in the order of the common inspection framework.

How well do learners achieve?

- Achievement and standards on CoVE programmes are high. Pass rates are very good, well above the national averages on advanced level courses and vocational courses. This has been the case over time. Retention rates too are very high. The college is maintaining the high standards and quality that were reported in the last inspection. The CoVE has fitted very well into enhancing the provision and opportunities for the students at the college and extending opportunities for pupils in local schools to use the

Stratford Centre. The acquisition of the CoVE has supported the college plan to develop a good vocational curriculum.

How effective are teaching, training and learning?

- The CoVE has enabled the college to bring in expertise of current practitioners, some of whom are of national standing, to enhance the learning and experience of the learners. The good links between the college and local schools have enabled the expertise of local teachers to be used effectively; for example, a respected advanced skills teacher provides lessons at Stratford Circus. Good progress has been made in sharing the excellent college resources.
- Many initiatives at Stratford Circus enhance the curriculum and teaching and learning. The Activ8 initiative, the development of international exchange with Namibia and the performance of 800 students recently at the Barbican are all good examples of enriched and enrichment opportunities for the students.

How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?

- Learners' participation is good and they appreciate the industry standard facilities and equipment. Teachers at Stratford Circus have developed a very good range of short courses, from digital music video production to advanced camera work. This helps learners to improve their technical knowledge and skills as well as enhancing their opportunities to progress in the world of media and the arts. The NewVic+ programme of workshops and tasters sessions for school students is imaginative, innovative and beneficial in helping pupils to make their choices when they leave school.
- Teachers at Stratford Circus have very good links with the creative industries and their awareness of current practice and developments is being used well in planning and running the centre. Through the contacts made, students have access to businesses and employers. Teachers at the centre are well aware of how to use their industry and community links in developing the diploma and the plans incorporate these major actors in the specialised diploma preparation script.

How well are learners guided and supported?

- Pathways are well established from level 2 and students know they can continue with a high quality vocational option in the creative arts and media at the college. Progression to higher education is good.
- The college is one of several partners who liaise with Connexions and Careers Management Futures to provide a good range of careers and employment guidance.

- Through the specialised diplomas, the college is seeking to improve the range of progression opportunities and intends to raise aspirations for more students and their parents/carers through the marketing of these qualifications.
- The CoVE offers effective business support to young graduates from the industry who are embarking on their careers. Some of them act as mentors to current students, giving them insights from their own experience.

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

- Plans to develop the Circus further are well articulated and thorough. Managers of the Circus have been successful in meeting planned targets to date. They have a clear vision and purpose. The CoVE is very well led and managed and links well with other areas of the college to enhance the curriculum.
- The college is taking the lead in the Gateway submission in partnership with the local authority. There are excellent links with the schools both informally and through the established partnership boards. Some effective staff training events for local teachers have already been run. A good programme of staff development is being planned to improve teaching and support strategies for the 14 to 16 programme.
- Communications between the schools and CoVE staff are good and resources are shared well. The college is providing strong leadership on the development of the specialised diplomas and using its staff expertise well. The 14 to 16 offer in the borough is well established with the 14 to 19 prospectus setting out clearly the offer for students.
- The CoVE has helped to bring in other funding from ESF, the LDA, CIDA and ERDF to develop resources and run projects such as the Home-grown group project for local students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- There is very good experience of working successfully in partnerships and across sectors, with a strong focus on inclusion.

Areas for development which you have noted and are working on:

- ensuring commitment of resources on a borough-wide basis to support the development and implementation of the strategy
- further progress towards harmonising a common timetable between schools and the college.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the ways in which your CoVE supports 14 to 19 curriculum development in the area.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of the half-term following the visit. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Green HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector