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Mr Clive Corbett  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Corbett

Ofsted survey inspection programme – a comparison of the effectiveness of post 16 providers

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 and 25 September 2007 to look at work in level 3 provision.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and short visits to five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of level 3 provision was judged to be outstanding.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Almost all students who begin level 3 courses complete them and meet or exceed challenging targets in doing so. High grade achievement at GCE A level is well above the national average and has improved over the last three years. Overall, students' progress from their starting points on entry is exceptional, as shown by national performance data systems that place the school in the top 14% of similar schools.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of level 3 provision

The quality of teaching and learning at level 3, including academic guidance is good. Teachers are generally effective in promoting independent learning in the sixth form, but the school recognises that students' independent learning remains an area for

development. The guidance and support provided is highly valued by the students and is outstanding. Students are given a highly effective and early introduction to the course work and study requirements in the sixth form, with particular emphasis on the standard of work required.

The tracking and monitoring of individual student progress is outstanding. Students show excellent awareness of their progress towards challenging and stretching targets. They consider their individual academic review and the very detailed feedback on their work extremely valuable in helping them to do as well as they can. Students particularly value their input into setting their own targets in conjunction with their teachers.

### Quality of curriculum

The extent to which programmes and activities meet students' needs and interests is outstanding. Students settle smoothly into their studies in the sixth form as a result of their high quality induction and accurate guidance regarding course selection. They have a wide choice of subjects and the school manages to accommodate most subject combinations. Teachers know their students exceptionally well, and planning for level 3 provision accommodates very well students' prior attainment and knowledge and skills from previous study. There are well-considered and developed plans for further broadening of the curriculum through the provision of additional courses and progression routes from Key Stage 4.

### Leadership and management of level 3 provision

Leadership and management are outstanding as shown by their impact on students' achievement and standards in level 3 provision. As a result there is excellent capacity to improve.

Self-evaluation is extremely effective. Leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses which informs tightly-focused improvement planning. They use performance data well to drive overall improvement in the sixth form through both detailed analysis and the setting of challenging targets. Leaders and managers have worked very successfully to improve teaching and learning in the sixth form since the last inspection. There are well developed plans to improve the quality of the provision still further.

### Inclusion

Inclusion is good. Recruitment to level 3 provision is inclusive, reflecting the range of students' prior attainment at GCSE. The school is well aware of how individual students achieve. Teachers monitor and track individual students' progress extremely well and take timely action to address under-achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- fully implementing plans to improve independent learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop level 3 provision in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Russell Jordan  
Her Majesty's Inspector