

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms Lynne Morris
Principal
Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College
Highgate
Birmingham
West Midlands
B12 9DS

Dear Ms Morris

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 and students, during my visit on 17-18 October 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 observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

- Achievement and standards are good. Students' attainment on entry to advanced courses in Year 12 is below that usually found nationally. They make good progress and achieve very well on most level 3 courses. Pass rates are above the national average, but attainment of the highest grades is a little below average. In 2007, results compared well with those of similar colleges. There is some difference in students' achievement between different subjects.
- Students from different social and ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well, including the large majority for whom English is not their first language.

Quality of teaching and learning in level 3 provision, including academic guidance

- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have excellent command of their subjects, and students find learning enjoyable and rewarding in most lessons.
- Academic guidance is outstanding, and students from all backgrounds are helped to overcome obstacles to learning so as to enable them to achieve well. Teachers and guidance staff monitor students' progress closely. They intervene robustly to support any individual who is at risk of not gaining the qualification intended. Similar support to stretch the most able students is at an early stage of development.
- Information about students' prior attainment is used exceptionally well to guide work, to assist the planning of lessons and to help each individual reach the challenging but realistic targets that are set. Most lessons are well adapted to the range of learners' needs.
- Students want to learn and mostly respond well to teachers' expectations that they will use the skills they acquire to learn independently. Regular reviews of their progress encourage them to understand what they need to do to improve their standard and reach the targets set. Consequently, few students do not successfully complete the courses they begin. Students much appreciate the support they receive.

Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum for level 3 courses is outstanding. It gives students an extensive range of choice of courses to meet their needs. Students are convinced that their studies will benefit their educational aspirations and their future economic well-being. They say how much they enjoy the experience of learning. Extra classes and in-class support are provided to assist students at risk of underachieving. The college is sensitive to the need to enhance students' competence with spoken and written English to enable them to achieve well.
- Students' learning is enriched by a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- Induction to level 3 courses is very effective and much appreciated by students. It gives them the confidence and knowledge that the courses they plan to follow suit their needs and interests for the next stage of education and the career to which they aspire.

Leadership and management

- The leadership of the principal and senior staff is highly effective, perceptive and sensitive to the wide-ranging needs of all learners. Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders and managers at all levels have a very clear understanding of priorities for improvement.
- The monitoring and evaluation of performance, including that of teaching and learning, identify where improvement is needed, and ensure that it follows. Underperformance is rigorously rooted out.

- Information is collated exhaustively to monitor and track students' progress. Targets are regularly reviewed and used effectively to assist students' to achieve well.
- Helpful collaboration is in place for smooth transfer of students at age 16.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to gain new accommodation, which is to be brought into use next year, to enhance further the already outstanding educational provision available to students.
- Given its exceptional record of consistently providing a high quality of education to meet the needs of students following level 3 courses, the college shows outstanding capacity to improve further.

Inclusion

- The college's success in meeting the wide range of needs of female and male students of differing ages from all social and ethnic backgrounds is outstanding. Relationships across the college are calm, friendly and harmonious and students gain the confidence to rise to the college's high expectations that they will achieve well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that students' achievement in every subject reaches that of the best
- sustaining the successful drive to increase further the percentage of A and B grades gained on level 3 courses.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Tony Beaver
Additional Inspector