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Mr Keith Elliott
Principal
College Green Centre
City of Bristol College
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Dear Mr Elliott

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 26 and 27 November 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 five lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Standards are satisfactory, but achievement is good considering the low prior attainment of students on entry to level 3 study. Over the last three years success rates overall have shown a rising trend but are broadly average compared to similar providers. Success rates in AS and A levels remain broadly average, but pass rates improved in 2007. Success rates in 'other level 3 qualifications', including BTEC nationals, are below average, but they are high in NVQs.

High grade achievement in GCE AS and A levels remains above the national average for general further education and tertiary colleges and is improving. Students with the lowest prior attainment make exceptional progress from their starting points on entry to the college. However the college recognises that higher attaining students

do not always achieve as well as they can. National performance data systems placed the college in the top 24% of providers in 2006/07.

Quality of teaching and learning of level 3 provision

The quality of teaching and learning at level 3, including academic guidance is good. Teachers plan lessons well to accommodate students' different learning styles and prior attainment, and successfully promote independent learning. They use their expert subject knowledge well and provide a variety of activities and resources to engage students successfully and make their learning enjoyable. Teachers benefit from a well-planned professional development programme, including the continuing development of links with employers and other placement providers.

The good guidance and support provided is highly valued by the students. The college takes good care to ensure students are on the right courses. Students settle into their courses well and they are given a highly effective introduction to the course work and study requirements at level 3.

The tracking and monitoring of individual student progress is good. Students show good awareness of their progress towards challenging and stretching targets. The college fully involves students in determining their targets. Students consider the support of their teachers, their individual academic review and the detailed feedback on their work very valuable in helping them to achieve as well they can.

Quality of curriculum

The extent to which programmes and activities meet students' needs and interests is outstanding. There is a very wide choice of both A and AS levels and of vocational courses. This enables the college to meet extremely well the wide range of prior attainment and aptitude of their students and their future career aspirations.

Leadership and management of level 3 provision

Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment is outstanding. Leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. The rigorous and timely use of data at all levels of management to evaluate performance in level 3 provision is at the heart of a culture of continuous improvement, leading to highly-focussed improvement planning. Leaders and managers have well-considered plans to further improve levels of performance. As a result there is good capacity to improve.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding. Recruitment to level 3 provision is exceptionally inclusive, reflecting the wide range of students' prior attainment at GCSE and their varied and often specialised support needs. The college has a higher proportion of students from minority ethnic heritage than in Bristol as a whole. The college is keenly aware of how well individual students achieve. Teachers monitor and track individual

students' progress rigorously and take timely and highly appropriate action to tackle under-achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- maintaining the focus on improving retention in level 3 provision overall
- fully implementing plans to ensure that students with higher levels of attainment on entry to the college make better progress at level 3.

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 authority/Local Learning 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

Russell Jordan
Her Majesty's Inspector