

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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



06 December 2007

Mr Greg Molan  
Principal  
Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology  
London Road  
Shrewsbury  
SY2 6PR

Dear Mr Molan

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 28 and 29 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 four lessons.

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

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. 'Other level 3 qualifications', including BTEC nationals, now account for almost all provision at level 3. Success rates are broadly average for this group of qualifications compared to similar providers but are not rising in line with the improving national averages. Students generally make the progress expected of them relative to their starting points on entry, as indicated by national value added data systems. Plans for a well-conceived internal system to assist with target-setting and to measure value added are well advanced.

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

The quality of teaching and learning at level 3, including academic guidance is good. 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 good introduction to the course work and study requirements.

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 benefit from a well-planned professional development programme, including the continuing development of links with employers. A good variety of activities and resources engage students' interest and participation successfully. When teachers support students in lessons as they work on interesting tasks and assignments, they meet individual learning needs well. However, this is less successful when they use questioning to check learning and to develop learning points. This is an area for development acknowledged by the college.

The tracking and monitoring of individual student progress is good. Students show good awareness of their progress towards challenging targets and have very significant input into determining these. They consider the support of their teachers, their individual progress review and the detailed feedback on their work very valuable in helping them to achieve as well as they can.

### Quality of curriculum

The extent to which programmes and activities meet students' needs and interests is good. There is a wide choice of vocational courses that meets local demand well and is well matched to the prior attainment and aptitude that students bring to the college when they leave school at age 16.

### Leadership and management of level 3 provision

Leadership and management are good and there is good capacity to improve. Collaboration with a nearby sixth form college is strong and is highly effective in shaping the curriculum to meet local needs. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses, leading to highly-focussed improvement planning. They have taken well-considered actions and have well-devised plans to improve levels of performance in level 3 provision. It is too soon to measure the impact on success rates of the actions taken so far.

### Inclusion

Inclusion is good. Recruitment to level 3 provision is inclusive, reflecting students' prior attainment at GCSE and their varied and often specialised support needs. Teachers monitor and track individual students' progress well and take timely and highly appropriate action to tackle under-achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- maintaining the focus on improving success rates and, in particular, retention in level 3 provision
- fully implementing well-conceived plans to ensure that all students make better progress and meet challenging targets at level 3 relative to their starting points on entry to the college
- developing further teachers' use of questioning in lessons both to check learning and to develop learning points.

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