

Alexandra House T 08456 404040
33 Kingsway F 020 7421 6855
London www.ofsted.gov.uk
WC2B 6SE enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



09 January 2007

Mr R Wells
Principal
Hartlepool Sixth Form College
Brinkburn
Hartlepool
TS25 5PF

Dear Mr Wells

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 13 December 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 analysis of performance data.

The overall effectiveness of level 3 provision at post 16 was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

- Students make good progress and achieve high pass rates at GCE AS and A level. Students make good contributions in lessons, that are better than expected for the level and stage of their courses.
- There is a strong enrichment programme with excellent achievement by individual students. Progression to higher education, training and employment is good.
- Some courses have low retention rates and 'value-added' at A2 has declined in recent years.

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

- Teaching and learning are good with effective target setting which challenges the students. There are excellent arrangements for academic progress reviews which help to ensure that students make good progress.
- There is good staff development on teaching and learning strategies, although in some lessons teaching does not meet the needs of all students and relies on a limited range of activities.
- There are excellent support functions and advice and guidance arrangements.
- The quality of group tutorial work, particularly at A level, is inconsistent.

Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum offer is effectively modified to meet the needs of new students and is supplemented by a well used and extensive enrichment programme.
- Students settle into college life quickly and value the friendly atmosphere.

Leadership and management of level 3 provision

- Leadership and management are good with some very strong features.
- The well-understood and thoroughly applied quality assurance system is based around a robust self-assessment process. All self-assessment reports are accurate and lead to good improvement plans.
- The college has excellent links with schools, parents and universities.
- Target setting and action planning with departments is effective.
- The level 3 provision provides good value for money.

Inclusion

- Well promoted equality and diversity policies form the basis for college life.
- 'Every child matters themes' are understood and valued.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving retention rates on a small number of courses
- halting the decline in value added at A2
- developing teaching strategies to better meets the needs of students, though improving planning, and the frequency of changes in activity
- reviewing the effectiveness of group tutorials, in particular at A level.

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

John R Phipps
Additional Inspector