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Ruth Silver DBE
Principal
Lewisham College
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Dear Dame Ruth Silver

Ofsted survey: good practice in capturing the user voice

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 23 September 2008 to look at work on capturing the user voice. I am particularly grateful to the managers and teaching staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and for giving up their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to the students who gave up their time to talk to us.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students and scrutiny of relevant documentation

Features of good practice observed

- Strong commitment and clear vision from the principal and college leaders to establish and develop the user voice
- Development of a college culture that is safe and where students feel enabled to express their views and ideas openly and with confidence
- Highly innovative and continuously evolving strategies to engage different groups of learners in all aspects of the college's work, particularly in the delivery of the curriculum and within teaching and learning
- Effective communication has helped the learners' voice to become increasingly influential across the college
- Highly responsive staff that react swiftly to learners' concerns, often in a very practical way, which helps make a real difference to learner's day-to-day experience

- Effective development of strong links to personalisation and the idea that each individual student has something unique to contribute to both the college community and their own learning experience
- Good evaluation systems which help remove barriers to learning. In particular the meticulous analysis of course data, in conjunction with learners' views about each programme, has impacted positively on learners' attendance and retention rates in a number of curriculum areas
- Strong focus on learners' individual strengths which is effectively leading to high expectations and aspirations in all learners.

Areas for development

- Continue to establish systems for measuring the impact of new approaches and to more effectively capture the significant influence and impact of the learner voice within the college's self assessment.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the user voice in the college.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins
Her Majesty's Inspector