

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@Ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Anne Lakey
Chief Executive
Durham Community Business College
Bracken Court
Ushaw Moor
DH7 7NG

Dear Mrs Lakey

Ofsted survey inspection programme: the extent and quality of provision for pupils from day 6 of exclusion

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation and that of your colleagues during my visit to Durham Community Business College on Thursday 9 and Friday 10 October 2008 to look at the work of your college in relation to the extent and quality of provision for pupils from day 6 of exclusion. I would be grateful if you would pass my thanks to the students who met with me.

During my visit I gathered evidence from discussions with you and senior staff and from scrutiny of documents. I talked with two students who had been excluded and also with a parent. I observed work taking place in the Inclusion Suite at Fyndoune Community College. My judgements are related to the arrangements and outcomes for pupils whose exclusions meant you had to provide education for them from day 6 of their exclusions.

The overall effectiveness of day 6 provision is good.

Achievement and Standards

Improvements to day 6 students' behaviour and attendance are generally good although there are some exceptions, such as the five students who went on to receive permanent exclusions. Academic achievements are less pronounced overall but again there are some notable successes which are balanced by those who continued to be disengaged. Although still sizeable, the number of pupils who are excluded for more than 6 days has dropped each year for the last three years. Your measures of their progress and my discussions with students and a parent show that changes to these students' attitudes are good, for example, 70% have no further exclusions of more than five days and 60% have no further exclusions at all; 62% have improved their attendance and 65% have improved their attainment.

Quality of teaching and learning of in the day 6 provision

The quality of teaching in the Inclusion Suite at Fyndoune Community College, where your provision is located, is good. Although there were no day 6 excluded pupils in the provision at the time of my visit I was able to briefly observe the provision in operation with other students. I understand the provision would have been the same had day 6 excluded students been in attendance. The quality of teaching was characterised by strong staff-pupil relationships and a calm and productive atmosphere. The students in there at the time of my visit appeared to be making good progress.

Quality of the curriculum for day 6 excluded students

The quality of the curriculum for day 6 students is good. An individualised approach ensures that the curriculum is well matched to the needs of students from day 6 of exclusion. The federation between the two colleges means that there is a coherence to the curriculum for students as information on their abilities and needs is readily available to staff. Catch-up arrangements when pupils return to your college are effective. Good partnerships with other agencies and professionals result in students' being appropriately supported.

Leadership and management of the day 6 provision

Leadership and management of the day 6 provision are good. There is a committed and experienced management team directly responsible for day 6 provision. Monitoring and evaluation of the provision and the outcomes for students are generally good although more use could be made of the analyses. Excellent use has been made of the strong federation between the two colleges to establish the provision. The partnership has enabled good sharing of information. Systems are clear to staff and arrangements are made clear to students, parents and carers. Students get a necessary shock when they find they have to attend another college from day 6 of exclusion but they also receive good support once they are there and on their return to college. The cost of the provision equates very closely to the funding that has been made available to the college and this demonstrates good value for money.

Inclusion

Students are well supported in the day 6 provision and on their return to Durham Community Business College. The college is currently reviewing its management of behaviour policy and some changes have already been implemented. The use of other agencies and the use of the common assessment framework mean that support is well shaped for individual students.

Improvements that we discussed included:

- Making more use of the analyses of the day 6 provision to prompt actions e.g. to respond to the issue of a high proportion of pupils at school action, school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs who have been subject to exclusion and day 6 exclusion in the last year.

The visit will provide much useful evidence for our survey.

Durham Community Business College will not be named in any publication without your permission. Most evidence will be used at a general level to ascertain if schools and local authorities are complying with legislation and to identify the quality and extent of their provision.

Thank you once again for your co-operation and the work you put in before hand and on the day to help me gain a good insight into the work of your school.

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

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools