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Mr S Vines
Vice Principal
Orchard Hill College
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Dear Mr Vines

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff during my visit on 23 October 2008 to look at success factors in promoting equality and improving the outcomes for learners with profound and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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: meetings with college staff, meetings with students, observation of teaching and learning, scrutiny of documentation.

The quality of provision to promote equalities for students with profound and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding.

Features of good practice and success factors observed

- There is a very clear focus on individuality and the individual curriculum. Staff work with the learners and their interests in delivering the personalised curriculum. Through initial review, teachers find out about the particular interests of each learner and then use those interests as a focus for their learning. Each learner has their own individual learning plan and timetable and has their own session plan for each session containing their personalised individual objectives. Even in group sessions, each learner will be following their own programme and may all be doing very different activities linked to their individual objectives. These objectives are fully evaluated by staff and

learners at the end of each session. There is very high achievement of individual learning objectives.

- Very good use is made of the wider community to deliver the curriculum and the wider environment is an embedded part of the delivery of the curriculum. Learners use the local gym, swimming pool, cycling centre, shops, cafes and the outdoor environment, as well as the college, for their learning sessions. The local community is also used well for work experience opportunities. The learning environment is not course specific but specific to each learner's individual learning objectives. This ensures that the learners have access to a very wide environment in which their learning takes place.
- First and foremost staff treat learners as adults and there is a high level of mutual respect between staff and learners which promotes good interactions. Staff firmly believe that learners know themselves better than anyone, so staff listen and respond to learners and then support them appropriately. Clear examples exist where teaching and learning take place in environments to suit the individual needs of learners. For example, one learner has been taught outside of the classroom in the open access area because she found the classroom environment too noisy. Another learner, who had been at home for five years and found attending college stressful was taught in the taxi between home and college. The impact from taking such innovative approaches to teaching and learning has been that learners have succeeded in integrating into the college and other environments when they have previously not been able to do so. Therapeutic staff form an integral part of the delivery team. They successfully contribute to assessments, devise strategies to enable staff to successfully work with the learners and offer outstanding support throughout learner's individual programmes.
- The person centred review system is very effective in empowering learners to make their own choices about their learning and their future destinations. The learner takes a key role in leading the reviews alongside the teaching staff. Learners identify what they like and do not like, and what is and is not working for them. The reviews enable learners to build up their own programmes. There is a strong focus on destinations and what needs to be done to enable the learner to achieve their objectives. Detailed action plans are drawn up from the review.
- There is an outstanding ethos of mutual respect. Senior managers lead by example and model the behaviour expected from staff and learners. Staff and learners are valued, listened to and trusted. Everyone at the college, staff and learners, are treated as equals and with respect. There is a strong model of listen, respond and then support. This is modelled in the delivery of the curriculum, the support for learners and the development of the staff. Staff are well qualified and experienced and many have progressed through the college from teaching aides to lecturers to senior managers.

Areas for development

- The college has already started work on developing the language of the individual learning objectives to ensure they are more learner focused.
- The college has amended the reporting format for lesson observations to provide a stronger focus on the learning taking place in each session. This work will be fully evaluated throughout the year.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in the college.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Swift
Her Majesty's Inspector