

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



03 December 2008

Mr K Hollins
Executive Headteacher
Westwood College
Westwood Park
Leek
Staffordshire
ST13 8NP

Dear Mr Hollins

Ofsted survey inspection programme – New models of school leadership: influences and outcomes

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 02 December 2008 to evaluate the impact of new models of leadership on school improvement.

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 discussions with governors, staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the model of leadership, a federation with another comprehensive school, is outstanding.

The impact of the model of leadership on achievement and standards in the college is good.

- From broadly average starting points, students make good progress to reach above average standards at the end of Key Stages 4 and 5. Standards in art are exceptionally high, and students make excellent progress in this subject.
- Provisional test and examination results for 2008 show improvement. Although more students in Year 11 included English and mathematics in their higher-grade passes, managers recognise that overall girls performed much better than boys and are now working to close this achievement gap.

- Students in the sixth form achieve particularly well in the school's specialist visual arts subjects with the exception of music. A sixth form performance target has been set to support consistently good 'value added' in all subjects.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of effective intervention plans and well-targeted support.
- Improving assessment practice and rigorous tracking of progress are having a positive impact on raising standards and achievement. However, there is still room to strengthen teachers' use of targets to help students to focus on their next steps in learning and aim high in all subjects.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of teaching and learning in the college is good.

- Teaching and learning are good overall and there is evidence of an increasing proportion of teaching that is outstanding. Across the federation, teachers continue to improve their effectiveness because senior leaders ensure they have the opportunity to work alongside colleagues and share best practice.
- The mutually respectful relationships between staff and students underpin the very positive learning environment.
- The federation's leaders give clear guidance to staff about what constitutes effective learning and this is helping to drive up expectations of what students can achieve.
- The continuing focus on assessment for learning strategies is proving beneficial in helping teachers to plan work that is well matched to learners' needs.
- Leaders are successfully promoting independent learning across the federation and this is having a positive impact on the development of students' learning skills and their future economic and emotional well-being.

The impact of the model of leadership on the quality of the college's curriculum is outstanding.

- A rich and varied curriculum including an excellent range of courses is in place across the federation to meet both learners' needs and aspirations. For example, BTEC level 1 courses in land management and construction are being piloted alongside the introduction of the new creative and media diploma.
- Specialism in visual arts and languages extends students' opportunities, increases motivation and helps raise standards. The second specialism in languages was designated earlier this term. Besides French and German the college now offers Spanish, Italian and Mandarin. Gifted and talented students have the option of taking up an additional language in Year 11. Vocational languages are currently being introduced in the partner school.
- The college has developed purposeful and productive partnerships with local businesses and these enhance the curriculum. Extended work-based learning forms a part of most BTEC courses in Key Stage 5.

The impact of the new model of leadership on the quality of leadership and management throughout the college is outstanding.

- The restructuring of leadership and management across the federation has taken account of the development needs of both schools and is supporting rigorous accountability at all levels.
- Excellent communication, the consultative style of leadership and strong team-work are at the heart of the college's sustained high-level effectiveness.
- Comprehensive monitoring systems, departmental action planning and subject reviews inform the accurate self-evaluation of strengths and areas for development. The current emphasis on monitoring the effectiveness of learning is a positive feature. The next step is to sharpen this focus in lesson observations and work sampling so precise information about how teaching impacts on students' progress can be evaluated.
- The executive leadership has been highly effective in securing additional funding to significantly improve the quality of resources, accommodation and provision across the federation.
- Advanced business management is freeing up teachers to teach and managers to manage.
- The governing body provides constructive challenge and support in equal measure, and ensures that best value is secured in the quality of education provided across the federation.
- The college's local networks, international links, charitable endeavours and extensive work with other schools contribute powerfully to wider community cohesion.

The impact of the new model of leadership on inclusion in the college is outstanding.

- Excellent pastoral support helps students achieve their challenging targets for improvement.
- Flexible, well adapted provision ensures all students' needs are well met. Consequently, students with learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities are able to take full advantage of all curricular opportunities. In addition, gifted and talented students benefit from the extended, exciting enrichment experiences provided.
- Booster classes are successful in helping less confident learners to achieve their expected GCSE grades.
- The development of rigorous assessment and tracking systems across the federation results in early identification of any inequalities in achievement between different groups of learners.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to raise standards so that more students, especially boys, attain the higher GCSE grades in English and mathematics
- sharpening teachers' use of next step targets and focusing monitoring more precisely on the quality of learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the leadership of your school and the federation.

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

Christine Field
Additional Inspector