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Mr A Harris  
Assistant Director  
Derwen College  
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Dear Mr Harris

Ofsted survey: good practice in capturing the user voice

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 November 2008 to look at work on capturing the user voice.

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, scrutiny of relevant documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- Staff have a clear commitment to an open and mutually respectful environment that encourages learner involvement, on a formal and informal basis, both at a strategic and operational level.
- Well established student council that is effective in representing learners in all aspects of college life and of presenting student's views to staff and governors.
- Recent membership of national union of students (NUS) has provided an additional forum for learner voice.
- Good use is made of the citizenship syllabus, through the personal development programme, to allow all students to be involved and participate more effectively in college activities.
- Good student representation on a wide range of college processes and committees, including staff selection panels, new building projects, healthy living and the equality and diversity working groups.
- Personal tutors have a good understanding of individual needs. Students are particularly well supported when choosing their personalised programmes and in

supporting the articulation of their views for the student perception of college (SPOC) survey.

- Good initiatives to support learner voice including: use of video conferencing to develop confidence and support decision making during the transition from the college to further education or employment; the use of 'a day in the life' analysis of individual student experiences that includes both formal and informal observations.
- Students assist their departments, at the self assessment moderation panel, to secure the proposed department self assessment (SAR) grade with supporting evidence.
- Students have been effective in lobbying staff in the Bradbury centre for the purchase of ICT equipment and in changing opening hours. Students have also been successful in developing the centre into a focus for internal communications and events and for wider communications with families and friends using webcams.

#### Areas for development

- Further develop the opportunities for students to assess and influence their own learning experiences.

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

Bob Hamp  
Her Majesty's Inspector