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Mrs M Hunter
Principal
Xaverian College
Lower Park Road
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Dear Mrs Hunter

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 Thursday 4 December 2008, to look at work on capturing the user voice. I am particularly grateful to you and your staff for spending time with me and for producing a range of very relevant and helpful documents. I should also be pleased if you would give my thanks to the students who spoke to me during the day.

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 a range of documents, observation of a College Student Council meeting, and a tour of the student support area, learning support suite, tutorial/ALS rooms and the Chapel/Chaplaincy/RE area.

Features of good practice observed

- Very high priority given by the Principal, senior managers and staff to the importance of the user voice in maintaining and enhancing the college's outstanding provision.
- Application of the user voice in upholding strong social cohesion and full student integration within a caring, inclusive Christian college community.
- Very sound emphasis on encouraging students to participate in the daily life of the college and to voice their concerns and ideas for change. The college is particularly successful in seeking, listening to and responding to students' views.
- Very strong commitment to effective student involvement in the college's strategic and operational processes and practices, such as the college's staff selection process, the assembly programme and the re-design of the learning support suite.

- Well developed relationships with feeder schools that allows the learning needs of new students to be understood and transition made easier, which also makes a positive contribution to retention and achievement of students. Potential students and their parents/carers are provided with college taster days and parents' evenings.
- Very responsive curriculum offer in response to learners' voices. Recent curricular developments include film studies, textiles, a BTEC science award and an NHS cadets' programme.
- Extensive tailoring of programmes around learners' needs. Currently, the sports provision is being re-designed and extended in response to students' articulated requirements.
- Effective use of relationships with employers who provide work experience, careers talks, occupational mentoring, leadership training, and internships in response to students' identified requirements.
- Extensive range of opportunities provided for students to discuss their learning needs and to obtain additional support, such as that provided by learning mentors and student ambassadors. The college is extremely successful in identifying students who have dyslexia which in some cases has not been diagnosed previously.

Areas for development

- Continue to develop and implement the draft Student Involvement Strategy and formally measure the effects of the strategy on student recruitment, retention, achievement, participation and satisfaction.

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

Ken Fisher
Additional Inspector