

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Ms C Braddock  
Sutton Coldfield Campus  
Lichfield Road  
Sutton Coldfield  
West Midlands  
B74 2NW

Dear Ms Braddock

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 22 January 2009 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 students and staff; scrutiny of self-assessment and monitoring reports; minutes of curricular and student meetings and a recent student newsletter.

Features of good practice observed

- A strong ethos of learner-focused support through continuously developing strategies to encourage learners to feed back on their experiences.
- Good use of feedback strategies to directly improve outcomes for individuals through individually-negotiated and challenging personal learning programmes.
- Clear assessment and review arrangements through learner dialogue. These arrangements ensure that learners understand their progress and receive academic, social and emotional support when they need it.
- Learner views have directly contributed to improvements in facilities, course design and provision, for example additional seating, enrichment trips and activities, the use of external speakers and flexible attendance patterns for Access learners and employed learners.
- Outstanding opportunities to develop vocational skills through learner involvement in the design of learner-focused marketing materials and the production of informative DVDs.

- Clear strategies for student participation in quality control and improvement through the involvement of learners in staff selection, in representation on the academic board and in a range of focus groups.
- Extensive involvement of learners in local and national initiatives such as the establishment of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), local police liaison and business enterprise activities.
- Outstanding opportunities to develop personal and social skills through the student ambassador programme, through participation on a national radio programme and through advocacy opportunities such as peer mentoring and buddy systems.
- Outstanding response to the needs of local and national employers ensuring that learners' needs relating to flexibility of learning and assessment opportunities are met.
- Very high student satisfaction rates expressed through survey response analysis.

#### Areas for development

- Further identification and harmonisation of existing best practice across all four campuses.
- More explicit reference to the impact of the learner voice in the college's self assessment arrangements.

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

Clive Blanchette  
Additional Inspector