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Dr N Sinnamon  
Principal  
Kingston College  
Kingston Hall Road  
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Dear Dr Sinnamon

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme – Girls' and young women's achievement

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, during my visit on 9 October 2009, to examine the causes of girls' and young women's underachievement and long-term economic well-being and the good practice that effectively supports them. The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national survey report. 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 discussions with staff; observation of part of two lessons; discussions with two groups of young women; and relevant documentation provided by the college.

Overall, your work on promoting the achievement of young women and in developing their future economic well-being is satisfactory.

The college has a traditional curriculum offer, with vocational areas that are either predominantly female or predominantly male. Attempts are made to challenge stereotypical choices through promotional materials, open days, enrichment activities and work with schools. Young women on engineering courses are particularly successful and those on childcare and beauty programmes develop good personal and employability skills, along with a clear understanding of expectations in the workplace.

Features of effective practice

- A small group of highly articulate and reflective young women on non-traditional courses, such as motor vehicle and aerospace engineering, who are particularly well-informed about the impact of career choice on future economic well-being.

- Good support and guidance for pregnant teenagers and vulnerable young women, including for those who have been looked after, are unaccompanied asylum seekers or have physical disabilities, that enables the majority to successfully complete their studies.
- Effective support provided for disaffected girls through the pathway programme, designed for students in Years 10 and 11 who find it difficult to remain at school.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- low level of participation in college-wide enrichment activities by young women on traditionally female courses
- limited awareness by those young women on traditionally female courses of the financial impact of career choices on future economic well-being
- the recruitment of more young women on to traditionally male courses, building on the college's success with adults, particularly in relation to the science foundation degree.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to promote achievement and develop the economic well-being of young women.

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

Yours sincerely

Harriet Harper  
Her Majesty's Inspector