

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



10 December 2009

Ms S Dare
Principal
Northbrook College
Littlehampton Road
Worthing
West Sussex
BN12 6NU

Dear Ms Dare

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: girls' and young women's achievement

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 17 November 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 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 included: discussions with staff; observation of parts of two lessons; discussions with two groups of young women; feedback from local employers; and relevant documentation provided by the college.

Overall, your work on promoting the achievement of girls and young women, and in developing their future economic well-being, is satisfactory. Young women have a satisfactory, general awareness of future career opportunities and develop good personal and employability skills. The college supports young women well. The majority of young women choose stereotypical vocational courses and the numbers of young women following construction and engineering courses at the college is still low.

Features of effective practice observed

- Young women develop good personal and employability skills. They develop self-confidence and learn work-related skills. They learn to work in teams and to understand better the demands of the workplace.

- The relationships between teachers and students are good. These relationships effectively support and promote learning. Behaviour in classes is good. Many teachers have recent or current experience in the workplace which they use well to enhance young women's understanding of workplace needs.
- A broad curriculum is offered across most subject areas and levels.
- Relationships with local schools and employers are effective. These links are used well to build up a profile of prospective students and to identify needs early. The college has an effective tracking system in place to review and support students and to prevent early drop-out. Provision is adjusted to tackle barriers and to re-engage and challenge vulnerable girls and young women. For example, the college offers flexible starting dates and pays attention to its staffing complement to review how it might improve the challenging of traditional role-models for women.
- Care, support and guidance are wide ranging, accessible and well promoted. Support from personal tutors is good and is appreciated by students. The pastoral learning mentors based on each of the college sites have contributed to increasing some aspects of retention and achievement.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- tackling the recent decline in success and retention rates of girls and young women
- improving evaluation of the impact of teaching and learning strategies and methods on young women's progression and career choices
- developing specific strategies to tackle stereotypical course choices and improve the numbers of girls and young women in non-traditional course areas
- establishing thorough systems to evaluate the strengthened care and support arrangements for vulnerable and disaffected young women.

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

Linda Truscott
Her Majesty's Inspector