

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



6 October 2009

Ms Y Maskatiya
Thomas Bennett Community College
Ashdown Drive
Tilgate
Crawley
RH10 5AD

Dear Ms Maskatiya

Ofsted aspect survey – Raising aspirations and achievement: the power of partnership

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 25 and 28 September 2009, to look at your partnership with higher education.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with senior leaders and middle managers; the coordinator and a local representative from *Aimhigher*; a representative from the local authority; and your school improvement partner. I also visited four lessons, spoke to students and looked at documents, including school data and students' work.

Features of good practice observed

- The school is highly committed to working with a very wide range of partners, including higher education providers, colleges of further education and local agencies. The school adopts a proactive and innovative approach to partnership and works collaboratively to improve outcomes for students in aspects of education which the school alone could not provide. An excellent example is the partnership with schools in Mauritius, which has been successful in developing student leadership, raising aspirations and promoting cultural and international understanding.
- Effective and productive partnerships underpin the school's inclusive ethos and are used well to provide a flexible, personalised curriculum for students with wide-ranging individual needs. For example, links with the Fire Services and the Forest Schools initiative provide motivational

opportunities and complement the college's well-targeted learning support and development.

- Partnerships arising from the school's specialist sports status have made a significant contribution to improving the achievement and well-being of students. Accredited sports courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16 are providing alternative pathways and progression for students at risk of not completing their education at Key Stage 4 and unlikely to aspire to post-16, further or higher education. In discussion, students reported considerable improvements to their motivation, confidence and self-esteem. Course outcomes indicate good attendance, retention and completion.
- Partnerships with external agencies and local organisations are successful in increasing the attendance of disaffected students and improving their attitudes to learning. Students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties benefit from a range of therapeutic provision and opportunities to access specialist services.
- The school works successfully with *Aimhigher* to provide challenging opportunities for targeted students who have the potential to move into higher and further education. Most of these students choose to progress into the sixth form and apply to university.

Areas for development

- Consider ways in which partnerships could be used to develop the subject knowledge and pedagogy of teachers and contribute to their continuing professional development.
- Further evaluate the impact of partnership provision on improving outcomes for all students and teachers.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop partnerships in support of school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector