

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr J Gregory
Principal
Minsthorpe Community College
Minsthorpe Lane
South Elmsall
Pontefract
WF9 2UJ

Dear Mr Gregory

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: 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 22 January 2010 to look at your partnerships 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: scrutiny of documentation; discussions with governors, senior leaders, staff, students, former students and a local authority school improvement officer; observation of lessons; visits to the on-site Children's Centre and a feeder primary school; meetings and follow-up telephone calls with higher education partners and the Connexions service.

Features of effective practice

- The college has established a wide range of highly effective links with higher education to ensure that 'no child is left behind'. Your dynamic approach, sharply focused on improving the quality of student and family learning, is at the heart of community regeneration. As a result of this work, student's confidence, aspirations and achievement have risen considerably. Increasing numbers of students are progressing to a degree course and very few are not in education, employment or training.
- Leadership capacity, including governance, has been greatly enhanced. Together, senior leaders 'think beyond today', as they drive successfully towards achieving their ambitions and build on the improvement in

standards secured through offering diverse, personalised experiences to students.

- Wider partnerships have significantly enhanced students' personal development and learning skills. The 'Learning 4 Life' programme challenges all students to develop their thinking skills so that they can take charge of their learning.
- The college's specialism in science pervades all aspects of its provision and successfully enriches the quality of partnerships. Good examples of this are the Widening Access into Medicine programme with Sheffield University, the Think Forensics initiative with Leeds University and business for young 'super sleuths'.
- All higher education partners value the quality of relationships with the college because the shared 'end view' is intensely focused on improving the quality of learning to ensure positive outcomes for students, whatever their background or starting point.
- The Aimhigher initiative is highly effective in identifying, supporting and guiding students who have the capability to gain a degree. Students benefit from residential experiences, specialist teaching, family visits and celebration days. This has improved personal outcomes for students, increased post-16 and higher education participation rates and raised the number of first-time family graduates.
- Rigorous checking systems identify any concerns about the progress of students. Early intervention and tailored support keep students on track to achieve their goals. The college recognises the benefits of further developing the analysis and presentation of sixth-form performance data to support the evaluation of students' achievement in vocational and academic subjects.
- The college benefits from being a Training and Development Agency lead school in partnership with another school. This increases its capacity to foster the skills of teachers, enrich learning and improve the quality of leadership through effective and well-targeted professional development. Over two-thirds of teachers have made a Teaching and Learning Academy submission and a quarter are working towards a master's degree.
- Wider partnerships are used effectively to increase family commitment to lifelong learning by providing enjoyable, worthwhile learning and social activities for children, young people and adults.

Area for development, which we discussed include:

- further developing the analysis and presentation of sixth-form performance data to support the evaluation of students' achievement in vocational and academic subjects.

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

Clive Petts
Additional Inspector