

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



26 February 2010

Mr D Bishop-Rowe
Principal
The Sutton School and Specialist College
Scotts Green Close
Russells Hall Estate
Dudley
DY1 2DU

Dear Mr Bishop-Rowe

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 2 February 2010 to look at your partnerships with business.

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; observations of teaching and learning, including vocational and business-related courses; and discussions with you, other staff, governors and students.

Features of effective practice

- A positive and welcoming ethos pervades this cohesive and inclusive school; partnerships make an important contribution. Business links and enterprise activities support learning and help to secure students' future economic well-being.
- Leadership is carefully structured to ensure that business and enterprise activities are managed well. Governors, business partners and staff share common values and are ambitious for further success. They rightly want to extend partnerships and share good practice with other schools and colleges.
- Business partners are committed to maintaining links with the school and believe their close working relationship with the school is mutually beneficial. They welcome the opportunity to contribute to the achievement and development of students.

- Business partnerships and the college's specialism in business and enterprise have been powerful in shaping a curriculum that provides students with choice and flexibility.
- Enterprise education and business links have influenced teaching methods and increased the emphasis on practical activities, research and investigation. The focus on providing a wide range of activities contributes significantly to students' progress and enjoyment of learning. The regular use of business partners within lessons and outside the classroom extends opportunities for students to learn in real-world, purposeful contexts. As a result, their motivation and engagement with learning have increased.
- Business partnerships and enterprise activities also contribute to students' personal and social development, particularly cross-curricular themed events and residential visits which help to develop important organisational and communication skills.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to build links with the business community, and sharing good practice with other schools and colleges.

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

Ian Jones
Additional Inspector