

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



05 October 2007

Mr Daryll Chapman
Principal
Okehampton College
Mill Road
Okehampton
Devon
EX20 1PW

Dear Mr Chapman

Ofsted survey inspection programme – a comparison of the effectiveness of post 16 providers

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 September 2007 to look at level 3 provision.

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. 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: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and short visits to nine lessons and the sixth form centre.

The overall effectiveness of level 3 provision was judged to be satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and standards

- Achievement and standards are satisfactory.
- Standards are average, as shown by AS and A2 results for 2006 and 2007 which are broadly in line with national averages for 2006. Students' progress ranges from excellent to inadequate.
- Subject performance varies. In too many subjects achievement is below expectation given students' prior attainment, but in a small number of subjects achievement is above expectation. A small minority of students with very low prior attainment achieved poorly on some courses.

- Targets set for students in 2006/07 on A2 courses are not sufficiently challenging to bring about good progress. In too many cases the target grade does not differ from that expected from their GCSE grades.

Quality of teaching and learning and academic guidance

- The quality of teaching, learning and academic guidance is generally good. Relationships between students and their teachers are strong, based on the high level of understanding staff have of their students and the students' positive attitudes to learning.
- Teaching in a small number of subjects did not fully meet the needs of students whose prior attainment was lower than that of students in previous years. Teachers and tutors are generous of their time in supporting individual students.
- Teaching encourages students to think for themselves and provides good opportunities for students to work independently. Regular assessment and reporting helps students, and their parents, understand how well they are doing. Students are given clear guidance on how to achieve their target grades for specific pieces of work.
- Teachers and tutors operate an effective system of monitoring achievement and tracking progress against targets.

Quality of curriculum

- The quality of the level 3 curriculum is good and meets the needs of the majority of students. Students appreciate the steps taken by the school to accommodate their course choices.
- Further extension of the level 3 curriculum through collaboration is difficult because of the long distance between the school and other post-16 providers. The school is actively seeking alternative approaches such as distance learning and the development of a vocational centre to overcome this barrier. These are at an early stage of development or are part of the school's improvement plans and thus have yet to have an impact on provision.
- Students' prior attainment is effectively used in planning level 3 provision.

Leadership and management

- Leadership and management of level 3 provision are satisfactory with a number of strengths. In the last three years, the school has successfully improved the uptake in specialist subjects and greatly increased university applications. The curriculum is under regular review and has also expanded, together with improvements in the careers information and guidance available for students.
- The school, in the spirit of inclusion, has encouraged an increasing number of students to take level 3 courses in the last two years. However it has not adapted this provision sufficiently to enable the increased number of students with low prior attainment to achieve well.
- The newly-appointed director of post-16 has not had time to make an impact on the school's level 3 provision.

- The school has rigorous self-evaluation processes based on lesson observation and analysis of performance data and has rightly identified the need to increase the number of students achieving at least their predicted grades.

Inclusion

- Inclusion is satisfactory and school caters well for most students on level 3 courses. However, some students, particularly those with lower prior attainment, have not been well served by the provision in some subjects.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the target setting process so that realistic but more challenging targets to raise achievement are set
- ensuring the level 3 provision for students with lower prior attainment meets their needs more effectively through the development of appropriate support mechanisms, teaching strategies and curriculum programmes
- reduce the variation in subject performance, particularly by increasing the number of subjects where students achieve well and reducing the number where achievement is below that expected given their prior attainment.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop level 3 provision in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

Tom Winskill
Her Majesty's Inspector