Effective Performance Management – Driving College Improvement

Guidance for Colleges:
May 2014
**Contents**

1. **Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 3

2. **Ofsted Common Inspection Framework** ................................................................. 5
   2.1 Ofsted annual report – 2012/13 .................................................................................. 6
   2.2 Demonstrating the rigour of performance management by Ofsted ....................... 6
   2.3 What does ‘outstanding’ leadership and management look like to Ofsted? ........ 7

3. **Sharing college practice from Ofsted inspections – Emerging themes** ...... 9

4. **Key features of effective performance management processes** .............. 12
   4.1 Performance driven culture ..................................................................................... 12
   4.2 Performance Improvement ....................................................................................... 13
   4.3 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) ....................................................... 14
   4.4 Managing Behaviour ............................................................................................... 15

5. **Further information** ..................................................................................................... 16

   AoC Employment Helpline ............................................................................................. 16
   AoC Create Training and Consultancy Services ............................................................ 16

**Appendix 1 - Ofsted inspection reports from outstanding colleges** -

**Feedback on performance management** ....................................................................... 17
1. Introduction

Performance management is critical to delivering and improving organisational performance and ensuring that staff are enabled to perform to the best of their abilities in order to succeed personally and professionally, which in turn allows colleges to succeed. The focus should be on creating a culture that encourages continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence, rather than being solely about managing underperformance.

Performance management processes should reflect the context and nature of individual colleges and have a clear link to business objectives, policies should also ensure that everyone working within the college, including governors understand the impact of their contribution to the organisation. The role of leaders and managers in the practice and delivery of the process is paramount, as is the need to evaluate and continuously develop performance management strategies to reflect the changing environment in which colleges operate.

Overall College performance is the responsibility of individual College management teams. Colleges are, first and foremost, providers of education and training, the quality of which is measured and graded by Ofsted. Colleges have high expectations for what students can achieve and attain, not only through high standards of quality and performance, but also through continuous improvement. Poor standards of teaching are detrimental to students, damaging to the reputation of the College, and reflect badly on the sector as a whole.

Continuous improvement of teaching, learning and assessment is achieved through structured performance management and appropriate professional development. Therefore assuring high quality teaching, learning and assessment for students is fundamental through rigorous performance management systems. Staff play a key role in driving up standards of quality for students and the continuous professional development of staff is key to improving the student experience. Performance management systems should provide a structure for the development of staff to enable them to fulfil their potential and maximise the quality of the learning experience for students.

This document intends to support colleges to locally determine what key elements should be contained in an effective performance management system to drive college improvement, share practice drawing upon some existing practice used within the sector, and support colleges in their preparation for Ofsted inspections.

It also provides clarity from the inspectorate - Ofsted that inspect and regulate services that provide education and skills for students of all ages. Guidance on what Ofsted look for when inspecting leadership and management, specifically performance management within colleges in relation to the Common Inspection Framework 2012 is also provided.
In its role in providing employment support services to colleges, the AoC Employment Team as part of the drafting of this document, spoke to some colleges between February and March 2014 that have been inspected in 2013/14, and reviewed a number of Ofsted inspection reports for ‘Outstanding’ colleges – appendix 1. Emerging themes and key features in relation to managing performance and demonstrating rigour have been identified and are explored further in this document.
2. Ofsted Common Inspection Framework

As part of the 2012 Ofsted Common Inspection Framework (CIF), Ofsted inspectors make judgements on the ‘effectiveness of leadership and management’ by evaluating the extent to which leaders, managers and, where applicable, governors:

- Demonstrate an ambitious vision, have high expectations for what all learners can achieve, and attain high standards of quality and performance.

- Improve teaching and learning through rigorous performance management and appropriate professional development.

For a college to receive ‘outstanding’ in this area, they need to demonstrate that overall, quality and performance have improved exceptionally, or previously outstanding standards have been securely maintained.

The Ofsted handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2012 was updated in January 2014 and provides further clarity to colleges on how inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- strategies are effective in improving the standard of teaching, learning and assessment;

- leaders and managers review and develop constantly the performance of teachers and trainers through dialogue, coaching, mentoring and support and training;

- systematic and rigorous performance management is effective, including using appropriate procedures for tackling underperformance;

- leaders, governors and supervisory bodies (where appropriate) monitor the quality of the experience provided for learners and their outcomes;

- leaders seek out and share best practice, contributing to a coherent programme of professional development;

- resources, including staff, accommodation, facilities and technologies, are developed and used to support learning; and

- managers ensure that staff have the experience and skills needed to carry out their roles.

Where there is a governing or supervisory body, inspectors consider their effectiveness including how well they:

- provide challenge and hold the senior leader and other senior managers to account for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the effectiveness of performance management systems.
Inspectors also take into account, where relevant:

- the use of comprehensive arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality of all aspects of the planning and implementation of learning activities;

- how well leaders, managers and teachers analyse and evaluate the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on learners’ outcomes; and

- the effectiveness of strategies to engage with parents and carers, local schools and external agencies to ease transition to the provider, particularly for learners with significant barriers to learning.

2.1 Ofsted annual report – 2012/13

The 2013 Ofsted annual report for further education and skills provides some generic comments on performance management. “Getting quality assurance and performance management right are core to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Where procedures were ineffective at improving teaching, the systems for monitoring the quality of teaching frequently failed to identify where and why teaching was not effectively supporting all the learners. Similarly, managers typically failed to use data on learners’ performance to identify areas of provision with weaker teaching. All too often, these weaker providers either failed to listen to their learners or took too much notice of positive satisfaction learner surveys without checking whether the questions were analytical enough.”

As shown in this report, there is an area for improvement for colleges in effectively managing underperforming staff to ensure that quality of students’ learning experiences are not adversely affected.

2.2 Demonstrating the rigour of performance management by Ofsted

During 2013/14, some colleges raised their concerns to AoC about the approach Ofsted took when reviewing the rigour of performance management in colleges. Feedback from colleges initially indicated that the approach taken by inspectors when evaluating the robustness of colleges’ approaches to performance management was stringent. Some reported that inspectors focussed more on seeing evidence of formal action and dismissal rather than the organisational approach on the more positive aspects of managing performance.

In March 2014, Ofsted advised AoC and the National HR Network that the beliefs in the sector, that Ofsted focus heavily on whom a college dismisses and the reasons for the dismissal, to be false. Ofsted’s focus is seeing evidence of what performance management and professional development has been carried out before a dismissal
takes place, focusing on the impact on students’, rather than knowing how many people have been dismissed due to under or poor performance.

Ofsted advised that it is reasonable for colleges to dismiss an individual who is not performing well in their role, however colleges need to be able to demonstrate how poor performance is managed and that all avenues have been exhausted, including providing support and professional development, before a dismissal decision is made.

By lunchtime on the first day of inspection, the inspector should be given details of findings and the use made of performance management processes, in addition to the evidence of the work of governors and their impact, where applicable. The information given to the inspector must demonstrate how the human resources department manages poor performance, how they have up-skilled their low performing staff and whether managers have the necessary skills to carry out their roles effectively.

If there is a governing body in the college, inspectors will also consider how effective they are, including if the governing body challenges and holds senior management or senior leaders accountable. Inspectors also want to see that governors have a diverse set of skills and experiences.

The inspection reports following the inspection itself will review how high performance is rewarded and the way poor performance and long term absences are managed through the implementation of policies and procedures at the college.

During the inspection there is a focus on how the performance of staff is monitored through their appraisals, as well as the outcomes of lesson observations. Ofsted advise that these should be linked to annual reviews on staff performance. Individual performance targets need to be linked to the college’s strategic objectives and Ofsted will examine how staff are motivated to achieve them. In addition, Ofsted want colleges to demonstrate how poor performing staff are receiving the help and support to develop themselves and how supportive the college’s performance management policy is. The quality of the experience provided to learners and the impact of this should also be monitored by leaders and governors.

2.3 What does ‘outstanding’ leadership and management look like to Ofsted?

Ofsted’s grade characteristics of for outstanding ‘Effectiveness of leadership and management’ comprises of the following:

All of the provider’s activities demonstrate the pursuit of excellence through innovative responses to local and national need, and, over a sustained period of time, an uncompromising ambition to improve performance constantly, or maintain the highest levels of performance, for all learners, including those in subcontracted provision.

All leaders and managers, including the governing body or supervisory body (where appropriate), have high expectations of learners and the organisation as a whole; they
lead by example. Governors hold leaders and managers to account effectively for all aspects of the provider’s performance. Actions are based on the provider’s self-assessment processes that provide a deep and accurate understanding of data and performance, and of staff and learners’ skills and attributes.

Leaders and managers take actions that focus relentlessly on improving teaching, learning and assessment, which are likely to be outstanding and at least consistently good. Professional development is underpinned by highly rigorous performance management that encourages, challenges and supports staff to improve.

Appendix 1 provides extracts taken from Ofsted inspection reports from outstanding colleges since the introduction of the 2012 Ofsted CIF. The extracts focus on leadership and management, specifically performance management.
3. Sharing college practice from Ofsted inspections – Emerging themes

Some colleges that have been through inspections in 2013/14 volunteered to share their Ofsted inspection experience with the AoC Employment Team in February and March 2014 to share with other colleges. This section provides the key emerging themes on managing performance arising out of the discussions to allow practice to be shared with the sector.

Focus on the learner experience

- Colleges should be able to evidence that poor performance does not have an adverse impact on the students’ experience.

Effective, transparent and robust performance management procedures

- Ensure a clear policy and procedure is in place.
- Robust strategies are in place for quality assurance and performance management that raise standards, encourage, challenge and support employees to continuously improve.
- The procedure should be transparent and all staff should fully understand the performance management procedure, its purpose and all the different stages within it.
- Provide evidence to inspectors in order for them to see how underperformance is proactively managed and what management action has been taken. Provide a range of case studies that reflect different stages of the college’s performance management procedure.
- Inspectors did not focus on seeing whether the college made the right decision, but were interested in understanding how the performance management process was utilised and appropriate action was taken when underperformance was evident, e.g. appropriate support measures implemented.
- Colleges should be in a position to demonstrate pro-activeness and show that systems in place are effective to alert HR and managers of early signs of underperformance and be able to respond quickly to assist staff to improve.
- Have in place a variety of methods and systems to assess performance, not solely relying on lesson observation feedback and outcomes.
- Ensure that records are kept where performance issues have been addressed and are being managed.

Graded lesson observation schemes
• Inspectors were keen to understand whether lesson observation schemes were graded, how they were graded, what criteria was used, feedback offered following an observation, and whether these were clearly linked to the performance management process. They also wanted to see evidence of the support offered to those that did not achieve a satisfactory lesson observation grade to be satisfied that there was no adverse impact on students’ learning experience.

• Inspectors were keen to observe as many lessons as possible across the grading spectrum.

Staff appraisals and performance development plans

• Strong focus from Ofsted to review staff appraisal records and review the appraisal framework. At one college, the inspector requested to see a sample of staff appraisal records for current and previous years and spent some time looking at these to satisfy themselves that performance management was embedded into the appraisal process and ensuring that they were evidence based. One college was scrutinised for the number of incomplete appraisals returned to HR.

• Have in place well informed, detailed action plans for staff that stretch and challenge individuals.

Evidence of continuing professional development

• Inspectors were interested in seeing evidence of an extensive range of continuing professional development and training activities and how this is monitored, recorded, evaluated and how the CPD plan is bought together. For example, one college was able to demonstrate this by filtering in feedback from lesson observation to actions plans which forms part of the appraisal process, and another college was able to demonstrate sharing of good practice across curriculum areas.

• Colleges should be able to show that CPD is evident and demonstrate the impact this has on improving teaching, learning and assessment, students’ experiences and outcome for learners even when staff are graded good or better.

• One college was able to demonstrate that lecturers were able to spend two days each academic year in industry and could provide evidence of learning from the work experience and how it impacted on how they taught classes and whether any techniques were reviewed and revised as a result of the experience.

• In another college, teachers regularly complete technical updating in industry through a highly valued programme of secondment.
• Have in place an imaginative assortment of staff development activities that focus clearly on developing teachers’ range and depth of pedagogical techniques.

Support for teaching staff

• Have in place a selection of strategies, including coaching and mentoring by advanced practitioners and a range of specialists, to motivate teachers to reflect on their practice, to share their ideas, and to improve. Advanced practitioners can provide support to teaching staff who are new to their role or those who may be struggling in some areas. They can assist by encouraging staff to be innovative and try out new approaches and experiments in their teaching.

Triangulation

• Colleges indicated that inspectors spoke to managers, staff and students after meeting with human resources, to ensure they were aware of how the college manages underperformance that they understand how the appraisal process operates and to establish what support is provided by human resources to manage underperformance. Ofsted were keen to see a ‘joined-up’ approach.

Know how qualified your staff are

• One college reported that the inspector wanted to see the qualification profile of all staff and to see what CPD was planned for the future. The college held this data on an internal spreadsheet so was in a position to provide this to the inspector.

Performance related pay

• Colleges were asked whether pay structures were related to performance reviews.

• Some colleges operate a performance related pay structure for all staff. Managers then recommend staff for pay progression based on their performance each year. Those colleges that did not operate such a scheme were asked to provide reasons for not implementing such a scheme.

• One college was identified as having in place a pay scale for teachers whereby progression up the pay scale is linked not only to managers’ appraisals of their performance, but also to students’ views.
4. Key features of effective performance management processes

Following feedback from Ofsted, AoC member colleges and further research in this area, the AoC Employment Team has identified key features that colleges should consider when implementing or reviewing performance management systems to drive college improvement. This section provides an overview of these key features. An effective performance management system should:

- provide enough guidance to staff so they understand what is expected of them;
- provide adequate flexibility so that creativity and strengths are nurtured; and
- provide sufficient control so that staff understand what the college’s aims and goals are.

AoC has identified four main features that should be included in a structured performance management process:

- Performance driven culture
- Performance improvement
- Continuous professional development
- Managing behaviour

The following section provides a summary of the key elements that can be found in each feature.

4.1 Performance driven culture

It is critical for colleges to create or develop a performance culture that strives for, and delivers continuous improvement in respect of individuals, teams, the college and the achievements of students to ensure performance improvement. Energy should be focused on ensuring that students are at the heart of what the college does, to encourage them to succeed and grow. The working environment should allow staff to feel valued and engaged at work and the ethos of the college should promote mutual trust and confidence, which in turn improves morale, creates loyalty and increases overall productivity. Values of the college should reflect the behaviours expected of staff. Some of the other important elements that colleges should consider are provided below.

- Leaders and managers embrace change and encourage innovation.
• Leaders and managers are responsible for creating and communicating expectations and being role models.

• All staff take ownership and are accountable for their actions.

• Clear job descriptions are in place and suitable people are recruited through appropriate selection processes. An effective and strong induction, development and training programme are provided to staff.

4.2 Performance Improvement

As identified throughout this document, it is critical for colleges to monitor and manage staff performance to drive forward continuous college improvement. A summary of the main elements that colleges should consider to ensure performance improvement are provided below.

• Draft clear and proportionate policies that reflect a performance driven culture. Move away from ‘capability’ and using language such as ‘achieving excellence’.

• Manage staff well to maximise staff potential and performance to get the best out of them.

• Ensure communication to staff is clear, that there may be positive consequences for success and negative consequences for underperformance against action plans.

• Continuous improvement should be for all staff, not just for failing employees.

• Define and communicate individual goals and corporate college strategy. This serves as the rationale for objectives and targets which stretch organisational capability.

• Managers and leaders should set aspirational targets and staff should be held accountable for achievement of goals. Aspirations should be translated into long and short-term objectives.

• Personal objectives and outcomes should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, and Time-bound) and linked to organisational goals that include raising students’ achievements.

• Allow staff the freedom to take ownership of their work and encourage progression, by providing direction, not control.

• Provide regular feedback and monitor progress on performance and objectives.

• Early intervention to address underperformance issues in a positive and supportive manner by offering support, coaching, mentoring and training. Managers should be confident to raise issues with staff.
Lesson observations and learning walks should be linked to continuous improvement of performance.

Utilise data to monitor and evaluate the quality of the learning experience for students and measure outcomes regularly to assess progress and effectiveness of departments and teams.

Maintain records of performance management discussions and progress on development plans.

The appraisal framework and process should include listening, observing, providing constructive feedback, and providing recognition.

Have in place performance-related-pay structures.

### 4.3 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

With a greater emphasis placed on building or creating an organisation that is beyond outstanding, college staff may be required to maintain professionalisation and professionalism to grow and excel in their relevant field of work. This is not only in relation to technical skills, pedagogy and maintaining industry standards; it also includes allowing staff to develop their soft skills to be able to continue to develop professionally. This section provides some of the key elements that colleges should consider in relation to CPD.

- CPD should be embedded throughout the performance management system to improve teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for students.

- Line managers should be trained to have the necessary people management skills and be equipped to effectively motivate and manage teams.

- Training and development opportunities allow staff to learn, enhance, and continuously develop their skills and knowledge.

- Staff are equipped to manage challenging behaviour and assist students with special educational or support needs.

- Talent is nurtured through training and development to encourage progression.

- The impact of CPD is monitored to assure its effectiveness.

- Celebrate success and share good practice with colleagues.
4.4 Managing Behaviour

Colleges aspire to have a workforce that reflects the values of the organisation. These values should be embedded throughout the college and the behaviours displayed by staff should reflect the values and culture of the college. A summary of the main elements that colleges should consider when managing behaviour are provided below.

- Ensure staff are aware of what standards of behaviour are expected of them.
- Staff are motivated, feel valued and are central to the learning experience.
- Exit interviews are used effectively to understand why valued employees decide to leave.
5. Further information

This document has been written to support colleges to locally determine what key elements should be contained in an effective performance management system to drive college improvement, share practice drawing upon some existing practice used within the sector and support colleges in their preparation for Ofsted inspections.

This document is also available in other formats, available by emailing the Employment Team.

Further advice and guidance can be found on the AoC website.

AoC Employment Helpline

Colleges can contact the AoC Employment Team for further information and advice on this or any other employment related matter by telephone on 020 7034 9900 or by emailing the Employment Team.

AoC Create Training and Consultancy Services

AoC Create offers a range of support for your college’s performance management needs. In-house training and consultancy packages, led by experts in their field, can be tailored to ensure all your questions are answered. Alternatively, delegates can attend our open workshops, held across the country, designed to encourage sharing of best practice amongst likeminded colleagues. For more information, please visit the AoC Create website, or contact Rebecca King Training and Consultancy Coordinator on 020 7034 2640.
Appendix 1 - Ofsted inspection reports from outstanding colleges - Feedback on performance management

The AoC Employment Team reviewed a number of Ofsted inspection reports for colleges graded as ‘outstanding’ since the 2012 CIF was introduced in September 2012. Extracts from these Ofsted reports focusing on leadership and management, specifically performance management have been provided in this appendix.

Chichester College – Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – April 2014

“Leadership and management are outstanding. The Principal, senior managers and governors have developed, and successfully communicated to staff and learners, a comprehensive and ambitious strategic vision and direction for the college. This vision, and the way it is being implemented across both campuses, has resulted in very successful outcomes for learners and an outstanding focus on developing their employability skills.”

“The governors work productively with managers and staff to support the development of the college and improvements to teaching and learning. They bring considerable, pertinent expertise to their roles and challenge managers appropriately.”

“Senior and middle managers have worked very hard to develop a culture of constant improvement across the college. Staff teams are passionate about their work, are highly effective and speak confidently about the clear guidelines and support they receive from managers. This has resulted in teams who are proactive in developing a highly responsive curriculum and very good quality services within the college. Staff teams regularly seek out links with other organisations that will bring benefits to learners and to the economy of the region.”

“Managers and staff have been highly successful in ensuring that the college curriculum meets local and national priorities. The college is a key provider of education and training in West Sussex, East Hampshire and beyond. The extensive range of work-based learning provision is responsive to, and reflective of, the needs of the local and regional business communities.”

“The wide range of programmes, both full and part time, make a significant contribution to workforce development and social cohesion. High numbers of unemployed people and young people not in education, employment or training, gain self-confidence and valuable qualifications at the college. For example, managers and teachers have worked in collaboration with Jobcentre Plus to help unemployed people complete work preparation courses. This valuable work has resulted in high numbers of learners obtaining employment, some for the first time in many years.”
“Quality assurance policies and procedures are rigorous and highly effective. Managers and staff accurately evaluate the provision across the college and in the workplace. Teams use and analyse management information and data very effectively to secure improvements. Self-assessment reports and annual reviews are detailed, highly evaluative and lead to thoughtful action plans to identify areas for improvement and rectify issues. However, in a minority of cases, reports and monitoring documents do not place enough emphasis on how teaching and learning can be improved. Review and evaluation processes are very well supported by clear guidance, excellent training and highly supportive monitoring.”

“The lesson observation system is mature and highly effective. Judgements on strengths and areas for improvement are accurate and evaluative. Professional learning coaches and quality managers give very good support to teachers in order to further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.”

“Teachers make very good use of an excellent range of professional development activities specifically aimed at meeting their individual development needs, such as the nationally recognised ‘Licence to Observe’. Across the college, the focus on staff development is outstanding and appraisals for staff are evaluative and highly motivating. Morale is high and staff are passionate about what they do. They are emphatic when stating that the college is a great place in which to work.”

“Managers make extensive use of feedback from learners and employers to ensure that the courses offered help learners gain qualifications and/or employment. Many learners are involved in carrying out lesson observations and they complete the same training undertaken by staff in the same role. They are also involved in the annual review and self-assessment process and course representatives have an important role in making sure they communicate learners’ views and concerns to college managers.”

Exeter College – Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – February 2014

“Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors and senior managers have established very clear values and strategic priorities for the college that foster excellence, innovation and a commitment to educating and training the local community. All staff are fully aware of, and actively promote, these priorities creating a common purpose and consistently high expectations of learners. Staff and governors ensure the college comprehensively achieves its mission to be an outstanding, dynamic and thriving organisation, working with partners to provide inspirational education and training for the local community.”

“The quality of accommodation and resources across most of the college is very high.”

“Strong partnerships with industry ensure students also have valuable access to other high quality resources across the city; for example, at the Barnfield Theatre and the Flybe Training Academy at the airport. These settings and partnerships further enhance the opportunities and vocational relevance of programmes for learners.”
“Well-qualified lecturers with extensive, relevant expertise bring out the best in learners by using this expertly when teaching. Managers monitor lecturers’ performance closely and deal effectively with poor performance. A robust performance management system ensures all staff are clear about their areas of strength, personal goals and institutional development priorities. An excellent professional development programme and timely, individual support significantly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.”

“The college’s self-evaluation accurately identifies key strengths and priorities for development in most areas. Managers ensure that all staff are actively involved in reviewing their courses and take responsibility for making improvements. All managers have very good access to timely, reliable and accurate data enabling them to review learners’ progress and maintain high standards.”

“Managers act quickly and sensibly on the feedback they receive from learners through regular and informative surveys and focus groups. Learners are confident that their concerns will be carefully considered and that appropriate changes made to improve the provision.”

“Governors provide excellent support and challenge to senior leaders. They possess an exceptional wealth of relevant expertise and comprehensively represent the interests of the region and local community. Governors take a leading role in setting and reviewing the strategy, financial priorities and improvement objectives. They hold leaders to account and ensure that the college has the capacity to continue to improve.”

“The highly effective management structure within the college ensures clear lines of communication and accountability. Leaders and managers actively encourage all staff to engage in the continuous pursuit of excellence and innovation in teaching and create good opportunities to celebrate success. The quality of curriculum leadership and management is excellent and staff morale is high. These factors make a major contribution to sustaining outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.”

**Weston College – Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – January 2014**

“Governors, leaders and managers have exceptionally high expectations for the college and its learners, which are successfully achieved. Within a highly positive ethos of success for all learners, teachers successfully raise the aspirations and ambitions of learners across all areas of the college through excellent teaching and assessment and an outstanding curriculum. This meets the needs of its learners fully and provides exceptional progression opportunities, helping the college to fulfil its mission and ‘Build Brighter Futures’”

“The Principal, governors and leaders have provided outstanding strategic direction and vision, immensely improving the involvement of the college in the local community and with employers. This very carefully planned and highly responsive approach to meeting national and local priorities has resulted in several very successful projects that have benefited the community greatly.”
“Leaders and managers have managed change and growth very efficiently and effectively. They have prudently overseen the growth of the college and ensured standards and teaching, learning and assessment have improved alongside growth. They are successfully introducing further study programmes, making very good use of their already extensive network of employers to provide work experience for many more learners.”

“Through genuine encouragement for innovation, keeping learners at the heart of their work and involving employers in the changes to the curriculum, they have achieved a culture of enterprise and innovation, where the views of the community and employers are used to create a curriculum that matches their needs. Learners now also have excellent opportunities to study higher education at the college through the development of its foundation degrees that complement the well-planned expansion of its advanced-level programmes.”

“Teachers and assessors improve their teaching and professional skills as a result of a rigorous and comprehensive lesson observation process that integrates effectively with a highly successful system of performance management and continuous professional development. Learners’ successes continue to improve as a result.”

“Through the college’s rigorous quality improvement process, managers carefully monitor the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment. Measures to assess and improve outcomes for learners, particularly those being taught in the community, are thorough and have ensured high standards, with learners receiving the same outstanding support.”

“Governors know the college well, are very involved in its life and very well informed about the learners. They support leaders constructively and challenge when appropriate. They ensure leaders and managers continue to strive for excellence and success for learners based firmly on excellent teaching and assessment. Governors involve their learner representatives effectively, and both listen to, and act on, the views of learners.”

“Many of the improvements have been propelled through the insightful and accurate self-assessment process. The college’s self-assessment identifies its strengths and areas for improvement accurately and clearly. The process of self-assessment is well established, involves staff appropriately and leads to improvements being made quickly. Managers, using their autonomy and the resources at their disposal, ensure actions in the quality improvement plan are carried out decisively. They contribute most effectively to improving teaching and assessment and ensuring the strategic plan is challenging, realistic and aspirational.”

“Managers collect the views of learners and employers frequently and use them well to improve programmes and other aspects of college life. For example, the college acted promptly on learners’ comments about securing a safer environment by ensuring identity passes were more visible. The design of the new ‘library plus’ was based on feedback and consultation with learners. Learner ambassadors and mentors provide a valuable and greatly appreciated role in guiding visitors and helping other learners settle into college.”
York College – Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – January 2014

“York College is successful in realising its ambition to be a truly outstanding college, where everyone matters and a successful future begins. The strategic plan, which all staff understand, prioritises students’ success and the teaching, learning and support which enable them to achieve. Staff have participated fully in the development of the mission and they understand clearly how their role can contribute to its success.”

“The senior team and governors are relentless in the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning. The college’s strategy for improving teaching, learning and assessment is clearly articulated and promoted as the ‘York College Way’ and ‘Good to Great’. The college’s highly innovative approach to improvement has bravely implemented a fresh alternative to traditional observations of lessons as the key improvement activity. The college’s approach is developmental, where tutors work in professional learning communities to improve practice and benefit students. Tutors are enthusiastic about this approach and readily embrace the opportunity to develop their skills that this initiative promotes.”

“Governance is outstanding. Governors know the college very well. They are generous with their time and experience and are actively involved in the life of the college. They receive regular detailed reports on the college’s performance, which enable them to support and challenge the leadership team successfully.”

“The college uses graded lesson observations effectively to monitor the quality of teaching and learning during curriculum area reviews and through risk-based targeted observations. Its extensive continuous professional development programme focuses on classroom practice. Events include prestigious external speakers, staff sharing best practice and courses leading to teaching qualifications.”

“Annual performance review of staff, including the senior team and the chair of governors, is rigorous. For tutors, annual performance review rightly focuses on their core activity. Action plans are target-driven and challenging.”

“The college has a strong focus on quality improvement through self-assessment, which is rigorous, thorough and based on evidence. Self-assessment is inclusive and managers include the student voice effectively through surveys and focus groups. Self-assessment judgements receive careful scrutiny from governors and peer colleges.”

Orchard Hill College - Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – November 2013

“The Principal and managers have established a clear strategic direction and ambitious vision for the college, along with high expectations for all its learners. This outstanding vision is clearly shared by all staff and governors. The highly effective strategies and innovative responses to local needs are excellent, resulting in the expansion of four new learning centres, now firmly established within local communities. Managers have
intelligently phased in the expansion of the centres to ensure the appropriateness to local needs and the quality of its resources.”

“Governors are well informed, well qualified and have a range of experience that benefits the college. They provide appropriate challenge and support. They hold senior managers to account to strive for continuing development of the college’s responses to local communities and for improving all aspects of learners’ experience and achievements.”

“Arrangements to monitor the performance of staff to improve teaching, learning and assessment are particularly thorough. Lecturers and therapeutic support staff are appropriately qualified and highly experienced in the areas in which they teach and support learners. Staff value the feedback and support provided through the good range of mentoring and support provided by the college.”

“The college arranges an extensive range of training and professional development activities, which benefits all staff. Where staff wish to develop particular specialist knowledge, they are well supported and, in return, they are highly motivated to use and share these new skills.”

“Self-assessment systematically includes the views of staff, learners, governors and partners. The process is particularly thorough, highly self-critical and clearly identifies the college’s strengths and areas for improvement. The college’s quality improvement plan links securely to the content of the self-assessment report and accurately identifies challenging actions to improve. Managers monitor the quality of all aspects of the college’s provision extremely thoroughly to identify and sustain continuing improvements. A comprehensive analysis of the results of regular audits of all aspects of the learner journey assists managers in identifying key areas for improvements, which inspectors also identified.”

Blackpool and the Fylde College- Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – October 2013

“The Principal and senior managers promote high aspirations and expectations very successfully for all learners and are relentless in their drive to improve the quality of all aspects of the college’s provision. They position the college successfully at the heart of the local community to ensure it makes a significant impact on improving the lives of local people and on regenerating the local economy. Managers and staff at all levels in the college ensure that every aspect of the college’s work contributes fully to ensuring that learners succeed.”

“Governance is outstanding. Governors are particularly effective in ensuring that that the college is led and managed well. The college benefits from the governors’ wide range of skills and experience in education and business. Governors know the college well. They receive regular and appropriately detailed reports on the college’s performance, and this enables them to support and challenge the leadership team successfully. Governors are involved very actively in the life of the college. For example, the chair listens to discussions at student forums and quarterly, wider management events when the college’s strategy is debated. Governors undertake a
The management of the performance of teachers is very effective and leads to improvements in outcomes for learners. The college uses information about its performance very successfully to set and review progress towards targets for teachers. Staff benefit from a wide range of professional development opportunities that enable them to achieve their performance targets and extend their skills and experience. A team of mentors provide very effective support to teaching staff who are new to their role. They encourage them successfully to innovate and try out new approaches in their teaching.

Managers evaluate the quality of provision accurately and comprehensively. They identify successfully college activity that is below the high standard that they expect and take action quickly to improve it. All managers, staff and governors are involved actively in self-assessment and contribute fully to ensuring that improvements are made continuously to all aspects of the college’s activity. The college listens carefully to the views of learners, parents and employers, who speak very positively about the college. The evaluation of the quality of the majority of lessons is specific and accurate, and enables teachers to make improvements to their teaching, learning and assessment.

John Ruskin College – Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – October 2013

“Quality assurance arrangements are rigorous and performance management is highly effective in raising standards.”

“Leadership and management are outstanding. Since the previous inspection and the decision to discontinue GCE advanced level courses, the college has been transformed into an organisation with high ambitions and standards. The Principal and senior leadership team have been highly successful in initiating and managing a significant programme of culture change which, together with a relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning, has brought about rapid and significant improvements in outcomes for learners with success rates well above those of similar colleges. Finance is managed well, enabling improvements to accommodation and resources.”

“Governors are highly effective in monitoring the performance of the college and in challenging and supporting the senior leadership team to drive up standards. They know the college extremely well and are actively involved in developing solutions where improvement is required, for example the college’s new English and mathematics strategy which was being implemented at the time of the inspection.”
Governors recognise their overall attendance is too low and they are taking appropriate action.”

“Curriculum management is very good. Managers are very well supported, challenged and encouraged by senior leaders to try out new ideas and take radical action to improve outcomes for learners. Curriculum managers work very well with the teachers in their teams, ensuring a sustained focus on the quality of teaching and learning and on the effectiveness of the support provided for learners.”

“Performance management is robust and highly effective in raising standards and improving outcomes rapidly. Staff benefit from coaching programmes and targeted and engaging continuous development which enable most teachers to improve their performance. Under performance is identified swiftly, effective support is provided to help teachers improve, but where improvement is not forthcoming, managers take prompt and appropriate action.”

“Managers at all levels have a detailed understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The use of management information to identify concerns to bring about improvement is outstanding. Self-assessment is comprehensive. Judgments are realistic and are acted upon promptly. Improvement targets are ambitious and stretching, monitored carefully and intervention by senior leaders is prompt where performance in not improving.”

Rochdale Sixth Form College – Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – March 2013

“Performance management is rigorous and focuses strongly on improving students’ experience and outcomes, even where they are already good or better. Teachers have detailed information on their performance following lesson observations and from reviews of data on the progress of students that they teach. This information informs their well-focused action plans and professional development. Inspectors saw many examples of how teachers had developed successful classroom strategies, such as successful and prompt starts to lessons and how to add value to students’ learning through developing their English skills.”

“Processes for evaluating the standards of teaching and learning and taking action to eliminate weaker practice are successful. The middle leadership team meetings provide a fertile ground for the sharing of good practice and teachers have good opportunities to discuss effective delivery of their subject. Newly qualified teachers receive exceptional support for developing their skills. Teachers complete short projects, for example, ‘getting the most out of your able students’, and share these with the rest of the staff. Lesson observation reports give insufficient detail about students’ progress and the promotion of equality and diversity.”
Swindon College - Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – February 2013

“Governors receive comprehensive reports from senior managers on key aspects of the college’s performance, and are increasingly adept at interpreting these reports to ask searching questions of college leaders. Governors recognise their responsibility for monitoring all aspects of learners’ experience, and are improving their understanding by touring teaching areas while lessons are taking place.”

“Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are exemplary. The formal system of observing teaching and learning is exceptionally thorough, and teachers are given extensive support to help them to improve where appropriate. Accurate judgements are assured by the large number of joint observations conducted, and these also enable the sharing of good practice.

“Where appropriate, employers are invited to observe lessons to ensure that industry standards are being met and that learners are being prepared well for employment.”

“In addition to the formal procedures an impressive array of strategies, including coaching and mentoring by excellent practitioners and a range of specialists, motivates teachers to reflect on their practice, to share their ideas, and to improve. These initiatives are supplemented by an imaginative variety of staff development activities that focus clearly on developing teachers’ range and depth of pedagogical techniques.”

“The high expectations that permeate the college are reflected in its highly effective performance management procedures. Poor performance is identified swiftly, and the college offers a range of personal support to help teachers to improve. If improvement is not forthcoming, managers take appropriate action to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged by poor provision. From the current year, teachers’ progression up the pay scale is linked not only to managers’ appraisals of their performance but also to learners’ views.”

Walsall College – Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report - February 2013

“Quality assurance and quality improvement arrangements, including performance management, are outstanding. The college maintains a relentless focus on ensuring that students’ outcomes and the quality of students’ experiences are the best they can be.”

“The Principal, senior leaders and governors set a very clear strategic direction and have an ambitious vision for the college and its students. They are clearly focused on attaining very high standards of teaching to ensure that students achieve as well as they can. The successful strategy enables students to become skilled, professional and enterprising and places the college at the heart of the local community.”

“The college’s assiduous determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning and students’ experience is captured in five strategic ambitions and values. These
permeate all the college’s activities and place students at the heart of the college’s work. Ambitious targets are set for continuous improvement and the college is meticulous in monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving these targets.”

“Governors are very well informed and provide excellent support to senior leaders. They ask the right questions to ensure managers are sufficiently held to account and their skills and experience are very well matched to the developing needs of the college. Governors meticulously monitor outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the college.”

“Quality assurance systems and quality improvement processes, including performance management arrangements, are outstanding. A rigorous programme of lesson observations, combined with tailored and targeted staff development, ensures that the quality of teaching and learning is continually monitored and improved. The programme of ‘intensive care’ has been successful in raising success rates on the small minority of courses that underperform. Improvements continue to be secured to the quality of provision delivered by subcontractors.”

“Teachers value the intensive and tailored support they receive from learning development coaches to enhance further the quality of their teaching. The vast majority of teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced in their specialist field and benefit from a wide range of professional development activities. Teachers regularly complete technical updating in industry through a highly valued programme of secondment.”

“Self-assessment clearly identifies key strengths and areas for improvement with a maturity of judgement that demonstrates a sound, self-critical approach. Monitoring of the college’s performance by the senior leadership team is extremely thorough. Key performance indicators are clearly linked to the college’s strategic ambitions and values, ensuring a sharp focus on further improving students’ outcomes.”

“The college listens to, and makes very good use of, students’ views to improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and to enrich their overall experience of college life. Students are well informed of the college’s response to their comments and suggestions through a feedback process known as ‘you said, we have ...’, and college managers take great care in evaluating the impact of the actions taken.”

Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College (BHASVIC) - Feedback taken from Ofsted inspection report – October 2012

“The Principal, senior managers and governors have a clear strategic vision for the college that they have translated successfully into practice. The overall progress made by learners is excellent, and consistently high success rates are attained. Lines of communication between all staff are strong and managers adopt an open and consultative style. An ethos of high expectations is prevalent among staff and learners.”
“Curriculum management is very good. Managers work well with their teams, focusing diligently on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Accurate management information is widely accessible and used well, for example to track the progress of learners.”

“Performance management of staff is humane but robust. The small number of staff identified as underperforming are set clear targets which almost always lead to improvement. Much sharing of good practice takes place within course teams, but the effectiveness of collaboration between departments is inconsistent.”

“The positive impact of rigorous quality assurance procedures is evident in the consistently high performance of the college. Subject area self-assessment reports are self-critical and evaluative, with detailed and systematically monitored improvement plans. The views of learners and parents help shape the report, although they do not always feature strongly in the text. Staff value highly the views of learners and parents, often instigating changes in response to their suggestions.”

“Highly effective procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning lead to improvements. Staff carrying out lesson observations are well trained and accurate in their judgments. Managers collate the main themes characterising teaching and learning into very helpful departmental summaries which are used to shape high-quality staff training programmes. However, individual action plans arising from lesson observations are not comprehensive.”