

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr S Pegg  
Principal  
Cardinal Newman College  
Lark Hill  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR1 4HD

Dear Mr Pegg

**Ofsted 2010–11 good practice survey inspection programme:  
improving science in colleges**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 10 and 11 February 2011 as part of our survey in science.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to a national report. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributors or contributing institutions but individuals and institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence base included: discussions with staff and students; observations of six lessons; a review of documentation; and a tour of the science facilities with a technician.

**Features of good practice**

- Pass rates, retention rates and success rates are consistently exceptionally high for science AS, A level and GCSE courses. The proportion of students achieving high grades in science AS, A level and GCSE courses are consistently well above the national averages.
- Value-added data show that for most advanced level courses, students achieve grades well above those expected based on prior attainment data. The progression is excellent from science A level courses to science-related higher education courses at university.
- The culture and ethos within the college successfully create an outstanding climate for learning and for personal development. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent, fostering the high expectations that teachers have of their students in terms of work, behaviour and respect for others.

- Teaching is outstanding overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a real enthusiasm for their subjects which they communicate well to their students. They use a very good range of teaching and learning strategies, and learning materials are of exceptionally high quality. Teachers know their students very well, including their learning styles, and they use this information extremely well when planning lessons.
- Lessons are challenging and conducted at a brisk pace with virtually no time lost or wasted. Teachers are alert to any inattention and set high standards which raise expectations. They are highly skilled at assessing students' progress in class and adapt their teaching to deal quickly with any misconceptions.
- Students are extremely positive about the teaching they receive. They particularly value the individual support and help that is readily available from teachers. The virtual learning environment provides valuable opportunities for independent study.
- Students receive excellent advice and guidance at all stages, from open evenings, taster days and enrolment, to advice about university applications. This helps to ensure that their subject choices match their career aspirations and that they are very well prepared for applying to their chosen higher education courses.
- Students' work is assessed regularly and those at risk of underachievement are identified early. Teachers are highly effective at tracking students' progress against their aspirational target grades. Additional learning support arrangements are outstanding. The use of the staffed open learning centre promotes a culture where students can readily ask for help.
- The college provides an excellent range of enrichment opportunities. For example, in addition to trips and talks, a medical society helps prepare students for application for medicine, dentistry and veterinary science at university.
- Very effective links with local high schools are used to promote science. These include special events for gifted and talented students to raise aspirations.
- Leadership and management are highly effective at all levels. The self-assessment report provides an extremely thorough and detailed analysis. As well as highlighting the many significant strengths in science, it notes that value-added data for the AS physics course and progression from AS to A2 physics are not as high as for other science courses. The associated action plan includes appropriate action to tackle this.
- Excellent use is made of the wealth of data available including ongoing assessment data and module examination results. Organisation and documentation within the department are exemplary. Very strong teamwork, the consistency of approach and the use of standardised assessments help to ensure that all students receive a similarly high-quality experience.

- The quality of provision is monitored highly effectively, for example through regular observations of teaching and learning and students' survey feedback.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- continuing with the college's existing strategies to further improve students' progress in AS physics, and progression from AS to A2 physics.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop science provision.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant funding bodies and will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Ruth James**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**