



Lord Watson 'most impressed' by facilities, staff dedication and students' pride in their College

Lord Watson of Invergowrie took time out from his busy schedule to visit Havering Sixth Form College on May 13th on a fact-finding mission.

The Labour peer toured the grounds and buildings, observed lessons and met staff and students.

And he was clearly inspired by what he saw and heard. He said: "I was most impressed by the high standard of facilities and resources and the energy and dedication of the College staff was very evident. The students that I met also demonstrated their enthusiasm not just for their studies and their own futures, but for the college itself; they clearly derive pride from their association with the college, and understandably so."

Born and bred in Dundee, Scotland - although he now divides his time between his Scottish base and his home in Hornchurch – Lord Watson had requested the visit in order to find out more about education for 16 to 19-year-olds in England, particularly the role that Sixth Form Colleges play.

His interest was sparked by a debate earlier this year in the Lords on cuts to higher and further education funding and he was particularly keen to find out how HSFC links with schools and universities and the type of vocational courses offered to students.

During the visit he explained that in the Scottish education system there are no Sixth Form Colleges and all 16 to 18-year education takes place in schools.

Lord Watson added: "My knowledge of the sixth form college sector was limited prior to my visit. Not only am I now much better informed but I appreciate the value of sixth form colleges in preparing young people for the world of work or further study. Indeed, I find it surprising to say the least that they have no equivalent in my native Scotland and I intend asking some searching questions on my return!

"I would like to thank everyone at Havering Sixth Form College for making my visit an enlightening and enjoyable one."

College Principal Paul Wakeling said: "It was lovely to welcome Lord Watson to College. He was obviously very impressed by the services we provide to students and the variety of courses we offer. He was also very interested in our commitment to the young people of Havering in that we guarantee a place here for all young people from the Borough."

Lord Watson was taken on a tour of College along with Christopher Walden and Ann Robinson, OBE, both representatives from the AoC (Association of Colleges). Principal Paul Wakeling and Jill Wilkens, Assistant Principal, Teaching & Learning and External Relations led the tour which took in parts of the old Dury Falls buildings, the Arts & Media department, the Learning Zone, History, Law and Politics area, the IT sector, the Library and Careers office.

After the tour, Lord Watson met Student Ambassador Co-ordinator and former student Halima Chowdhury, Student Ambassadors Luke Phillips and Kemi Quadri as well as Student Council Co-Chair Megan Knight. He also spoke to staff, including Assistant Principal for Curriculum Paul Nutter, Careers Co-ordinator Nikki Phelps, and Subject Sector Leader for Learning Resources, Innovation and Projects, Jane Button.