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14 January 2011

Ms M Cavalli  
Principal  
Warwickshire College  
Trident Park  
Warwick  
CV34 6SW

Dear Ms Cavalli

### **Ofsted 2010–11 best practice survey: value for money in colleges**

Thank you for your cooperation, and the hospitality of your staff and learners, during my visit on 18 November 2010 to look at work in securing and developing best value for money.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in value for money in colleges. The publication will include case studies about individual providers. If your college is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment prior to publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The visit focused on employer responsive provision. Evidence used to inform the judgements included scrutiny of documentation and meetings with senior managers, other staff and apprentices.

#### **Features of best practice**

- The flexible and responsive way the college meets the training needs of employers. College staff review thoroughly the skill needs of employees and employers when setting up training programmes, with a view to supporting employers in long-term quality improvement arrangements.
- The close and well-established links between the college and an extensive range of local and national employers. These strong relationships have benefited the college in many ways, including sponsorship agreements for specialist resources that enable trainees to carry out their vocational training with relevant, up-to-date equipment and tools.
- The high success rates of learners for both learner and employer responsive provision.
- The college's strong focus on developing the literacy and numeracy skills of learners as an essential prerequisite to success on their main programme of study.

- The extensive sharing of good practice and successful staff training, often led by college staff, provide a cost-effective way of improving the skills of staff.
- The effective use of online technology to improve communication and cut costs. Work-based learning assessors use online portfolios to reduce travelling costs and make internal verification procedures more efficient. Performance indicators for courses and learners' progress are available online, enabling managers to monitor current performance and take appropriate action.
- The good understanding of course costing processes at all levels. Negotiations between college staff and employers are open and transparent when developing new programmes.
- The rigorous financial planning and control procedures that enable senior and curriculum managers to administer and monitor budgets in an easily accessible way.
- The efficient deployment of staff that provides a high-quality service to students and employers in a cost effectively. Flexible contracts optimise the time available for work. Arrangements for assessment and progress reviews on employers' premises are planned carefully to avoid wasted time in travel and missed appointments.
- The entrepreneurial skills of senior managers who obtain funding from a wide range of sources. This funding has been put to good use, with substantial investment in new buildings which provide better value for money compared to the buildings they have replaced and better facilities for students and staff.

### **Areas for development**

- To continue with plans to implement electronic individual learning plans, thus enabling the progress of students to be monitored more effectively and efficiently.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop your approaches to securing value for money in your college.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**Tony Noonan**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**