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Mr P Hannan  
Principal  
Hadlow College  
Tonbridge Road  
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Dear Mr Hannan

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and learners, during my visit on 10 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 evidence used to inform the judgements included: success rate data for 2008/09; the most recent inspection report; the 2008/09 self-assessment report; a tour of key resources on the Hadlow site; meetings with key managers and leaders in the college; and a meeting of a representative group of learners.

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

- Learners' success rates are high and achievement is very high. Almost all learners who are retained by the college achieve their qualification or learning aim.
- The senior leadership team has the expertise and is successful in maximising opportunities to develop the work of the college alongside commercial activities. Senior leaders make very good use of agriculture and horticulture specialists within the college and the expertise of governors. The very close partnership working between senior leaders

with responsibilities for finance and resources and for teaching and learning and the curriculum is particularly effective in this regard.

- A very strong focus is placed on delivering high-quality performance to develop partnerships and become an organisation of first choice for learners and business in the region.
- The commitment, success and responsiveness in developing commercial activity and income have reduced the college's dependency on public funds successfully. The college ensures this work benefits learners through improved resources and enrichment activities while providing an increasing range of opportunities to develop skills for working in the industry.
- High-quality teaching, learning and support contribute very successfully to learners' retention and achievement. A time allowance for teachers, specifically directed to improve their teaching and learning practice, coupled with the use of the college's advanced practitioners and subject learning coaches, enables very effective use of expertise within the college.
- A very well-developed core curriculum has been reshaped and is centred around the main sector subject area of agriculture and horticulture, across the levels and includes higher education progression routes. The college has chosen to focus on land-based provision to specialise and to ensure it is of high quality. Courses for adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities contribute very effectively to social inclusion in the community.
- Learners contribute routinely and effectively in suggesting improvements. They feel they have a strong voice in the college, their views are taken seriously and acted upon, and they are informed of the impact of improvements. As a result, learners report high levels of satisfaction with the college.
- Very effective business planning, involving faculty managers who contribute significantly to strategic and operational planning and reviews of progress. The very effective monitoring of data, resources and use results in the college maximising performance and usage.
- Highly effective quality improvement processes, using governors, peer organisations and external expertise to ensure accurate self-assessment and a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve further. College support areas are integrated well into the self-assessment process in a whole college approach to improving quality for learners.
- Very effective investment of budget surpluses in developing the college site and learners' resources to increase commercial potential further and to ensure funded learners have a high-quality experience.

### **Areas for development**

- Coordinate and consolidate action planning at faculty level to monitor progress and share practice more effectively using systems introduced recently.

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

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

Yours sincerely

**Paula Heaney**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**