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Mr DeSouza
Vice Principal
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Dear Mr DeSouza

**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 learners, during my visit on 16 and 17 March 2011 as part of our survey of 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: five lesson observations; meetings with senior and curriculum managers, science staff and science learners; a tour of your science facilities; and scrutiny of learners' outcomes and other documentation.

Features of good practice

- The outcomes for science learners are very good. Overall success rates for science provision are high, with a consistent trend of improvement.
- They make good progress relative to their prior attainment and potential, with positive value-added scores.
- Learners enjoy learning and have high attendance rates and good punctuality.
- The majority of learners progress successfully to an appropriate, higher level course, including a large proportion progressing to higher education, many to study science-related subjects.
- Teaching and learning are good with outstanding features. All of the lessons observed were judged to be good or outstanding. Well-qualified

and experienced teachers plan comprehensively for lessons and use a wide range of varied and interesting tasks to keep learners motivated and engaged, with a good blend of theory and practical work.

- Very good rapport exists between teachers and learners which creates a productive learning environment. Learners are well behaved and thoughtful about their work, asking interesting and challenging questions.
- Science technicians provide excellent support to learners and teaching staff, helping to maintain the high standards of health and safety and good-quality laboratory accommodation.
- Comprehensive initial assessment of the learners' literacy and numeracy skills is used well by teachers to inform their teaching and support for learners.
- Responsive curriculum development has led to a broad range of GCSE and A-level science subjects and vocational provision, providing suitable progression routes for learners.
- Successful events are organised to promote science and science-related subjects.
- Very good support for learners is provided by science and other college staff. Learners' progress is monitored rigorously and effective actions for improvement are instigated for individuals identified as being at risk of underperforming.
- Strong leadership and management of science provision have maintained consistently high standards and led to further improvement in the quality of provision.
- A good ethos exists among science staff, with effective two-way communication between teachers, technicians and managers and much sharing of good practice.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the proportion of high-grade passes in AS physics
- improving the use of information and communication technology so that its full potential is exploited to promote learning in an innovative and exciting way, and developing the college's virtual learning environment to be consistent across science programmes
- providing, to those learners who take vocational science programmes, opportunities of planned work-experience placements in appropriate scientific organisations.

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

Tony Noonan
Her Majesty's Inspector