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25 November 2011

Mrs Gill Alton
Principal
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
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Dear Mrs Alton

Ofsted inspection of ITE provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications in the lifelong learning/further education sector

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your provision between 17 and 21 October 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and to a published national overview report. This report will identify the overall quality of provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications and identify the overall strengths and areas for development. However, in line with previous practice, inspectors will not make graded judgements of the quality of the provision in each centre; they will evaluate and feed back identified strengths and any points for further development. These are outlined below for your centre.

The published overview report will list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

Outcomes for trainees

The success rate of the small number of trainees on the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) course in 2010/11 is very low, due mainly to very low retention rates. Success rates on the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) course have improved in the last three years at a rate greater than the increase in the national averages, but they are low. Male trainees are much less successful than female trainees. Approximately one-third of trainees completing DTLLS in 2011 progressed to a Bachelor degree in education and training.

Most trainees make good progress with their academic writing, self-reflection and teaching and learning. They have very good relations with their learners, care for

them and are committed to improving their knowledge and skills. In the best lessons, all learners are fully engaged and learning is taking place, prompted by the most appropriate use of information and learning technology (ILT) and very good and searching directed questioning. The standard of learners' work and their rate of progress are good. Trainees provide very helpful practical and current examples to illustrate topics, which aid learners' understanding very effectively. In the less effective lessons, trainees do not plan thoroughly. They do not ensure that all learners are engaged in useful activities suited to their individual needs. Learners make slow progress and do not work at the required level. Questioning is too general and shallow, such that the same learners respond each time and others remain passive. Trainees miss opportunities to use ILT when it would help learners learn.

The course is very effective in increasing trainees' awareness of equality and diversity matters. Trainees are not well prepared, however, for teaching in different settings in the diverse lifelong learning sector, other than through discussion with their peers. The course does not prepare them sufficiently well to teach learners with literacy and numeracy needs, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and learners with challenging behaviour. Many former and current trainees are unable to claim Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status because they do not have intermediate level qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy.

The key strengths are:

- trainees' extensive and current knowledge of their specialist area which they use very effectively to gain the interest and respect of their learners
- the very constructive feedback by trainers on trainees' academic writing and following observations of their lessons which challenges trainees to think and act differently and helps them to progress
- well-qualified staff and very committed managers and trainers who, following a major restructuring, are determined to improve the quality of provision and the outcomes of their trainees
- the self-critical and realistic self-assessment of the provision which informs very effectively the quality improvement plan which, in turn, prioritises the need to improve trainees' outcomes.

The key areas for development are:

- increase the promotion of the provision to those groups and communities currently under represented in teacher education courses and in the lifelong learning sector
- improve the rigour of the initial advice and guidance and recruitment and selection procedures to include the assessment of the literacy and numeracy skills of each applicant and to ensure that each trainee has the potential to cope with the academic demands of the course

- improve the implementation of the systems to determine that all trainees have current checks on their suitability to work with young people and vulnerable adults
- improve the provision and monitoring of subject-specialist mentoring so that trainees, especially those new to teaching and learning, are helped to teach their subject areas very effectively
- increase the quality and frequency of the review of individual learning plans and target setting so that trainees know best how to address their main areas for development
- improve trainers' and trainees' skills in the use of the virtual learning environment and ILT, so that trainees and their learners benefit from experiencing different interactive and interesting activities, which aid their understanding and learning
- increase the emphasis given to, and the use of, the views of trainees, employers and teaching practice providers to inform the self-assessment report and quality improvement plan
- improve the rigour of course reviews and the monitoring of the quality improvement plan targets, so that current trainees benefit from the implementation of the required actions.

As explained in the inspection guidance, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

Shaun Dillon

Her Majesty's Inspector