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9 March 2012

Mr I Ashman  
Principal  
Hackney Community College  
Shoreditch Campus  
Falkirk Street  
London  
N1 6HQ

Dear Mr Ashman

**Ofsted 2011–12 survey inspection programme: employability - the impact of skills programmes for adults on achieving sustained employment**

This survey evaluates providers' response to initiatives launched on 1 August 2011 to use Skills Funding Agency funds flexibly to support people on benefits.

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and participants, during my visits on 18 and 19 October 2011 and 1 March 2012 to look at your work in employability provision.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff, participants, employers and other partners; visits to two learning sites; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of participants' work; and observation of four learning sessions.

**Key findings**

- The college's implementation of a strategy to support the unemployed in response to national policy and government initiatives is effective. Managers have built on prior experience in this area of work well to develop new provision. In particular, it has developed good partnerships within the borough, including Jobcentre Plus and with key large employers operating locally. It is now beginning to work with the prime contractors of the Work Programme to help increase direct referrals to its provision.
- The college has developed a good range of short three-week job-focused courses in retail, cleaning and customer service, which has recently been extended to include business administration, information technology and

security. These courses include a good mix of vocational and employability training and support in jobsearch. Managers adopt a flexible approach to reviewing the content, structure and assessment practices of each course according to the needs of individual groups. The college's provision for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) includes good development of language skills required for work that is linked effectively to specific vocational areas, such as fashion and childcare.

- The vocational training observed was good. Tutors had good specialist expertise and developed participants' understanding of the vocational areas well. The practical training observed focused well on developing specific skills and trainers set and achieved high standards of work. However, on all but one course, participants worked towards qualifications at level 1, and those that developed skills and knowledge at a higher level did not receive sufficient recognition for this achievement.
- Participants developed good employability skills and they received good support for jobsearch, CVs and interview skills. However, although the college has increased the focus on identifying participants' barriers to employment, these are still not recorded on individual learning plans in sufficient detail. The learning records reviewed showed that a high proportion of participants had low levels of literacy and numeracy and they did not receive sufficient opportunities to develop these skills while attending the short vocational courses.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- identifying and recording in more detail participants' personal barriers to work and assessing their progress in overcoming these through the development of relevant employability skills
- extending the capacity to support participants' development of practical literacy and numeracy skills in work-related and vocational contexts to increase their employability
- continuing to broker links with employers to develop purposeful work trials and work experience to provide participants with opportunities to practise their skills in real work environments and/or demonstrate their skills and potential directly to employers.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Hackney Community College

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to the Skills Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

**Karen Adriaanse**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**