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30 March 2012

Mr N Cave  
Principal  
Bournville College  
1 Longbridge Lane  
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Birmingham  
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Dear Mr Cave

**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 1 and 2 December 2011 and on 9 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 managers, staff, participants, employers and other partners; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of participants' work; observation of four learning sessions.

**Key findings**

- Bournville College is strongly committed to supporting and developing employability provision. The college has invested significantly in developing a wide range of courses that is extremely effective in improving participants' employability skills and helping them back into work. The college has extensive and productive working relationships with a wide range of partners, including employers, and has developed considerable expertise in the design and delivery of employability programmes.
- Participants receive good initial advice and guidance before starting courses. Initial assessment arrangements to establish participants'

suitability for courses, and their support needs, are comprehensive. Staff use the results of initial assessments well to inform teaching and learning strategies and to tailor courses to meet participants' individual needs. However, they do not always record participants' personal barriers to learning on individual learning plans in sufficient detail.

- In the lessons observed, participants received highly effective tuition and support. They developed skills and knowledge in contexts that linked well to identified job vacancies. They also benefited from the support provided in completing online application forms and improving letter writing and interviewing techniques. Many of the activities successfully developed their self-confidence and improved teamworking and communication skills.
- Many employability courses are devised in consultation with employers seeking to recruit to known vacancies. Course materials are of a high quality and participants often benefit from the opportunity to complete work-experience or work-trials as part of their programme. In many cases, participants that successfully complete courses are guaranteed interviews with prospective employers. The proportion of participants progressing into employment following successful course completion continues to rise.
- The employability provision is well managed. The college has established a highly effective team of well-qualified and experienced staff who closely monitor participants' progress in developing employability skills throughout the course. Participants, employers and tutors contribute to course evaluation and improvement planning and the college is developing its procedures to track and monitor the participants' post-course destinations more effectively.

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

- recording participants' personal barriers to learning and employment more precisely on individual learning plans so that they can be readily monitored and reviewed
- continuing to improve procedures to enable participants' post-course destinations to be accurately monitored and recorded.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Bournville 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

**Paul Joyce**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**