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Ms Fiona McMillan  
Principal  
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Dear Ms McMillan

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006-07

Sector Subject Area 15: Business, Administration and Law

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 25 and 26 September 2006. I am particularly grateful to your staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up a great deal of their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in business and administration. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the college first.

The evidence used to inform judgements included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of learners' work and observation of four lessons.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in business and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- Learners achieve well. On A and AS courses success rates are high with an exceptional proportion of high grades, well above the national average for sixth form colleges. Over the past three years learners' value added is well above the national average in A-level business and law, and AS business.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and have expert subject knowledge. Lessons are very effective; a variety of well planned learning activities engage learners in a stimulating and fun environment. Teachers use both their own and learners' business and commercial experience to enrich lessons. Learners develop very good research skills.
- Teachers' feedback on learners' work is very thorough; it combines both positive recognition of achievement and clear and detailed guidance on how learners can improve the quality of their work.
- A broad based and developing range of courses provides clear progression routes. Enrichment activities include; additional qualifications to enhance work-readiness, visits and the involvement of business people in assessing learners' work. The college has an inclusive recruitment policy for AS/ A level study.
- High quality induction ensures that learners' expectations of their courses are accurate and that they know what the college expects of them.
- Rigorous target setting and a highly effective and integrated pastoral and academic review process monitors progress regularly across all aspects of the students' learning experience.
- Effective action has been taken to address the retention issues identified at the last inspection.
- Teachers and managers embrace a culture of continuous improvement. Teams are very effective in sharing good practice in teaching and learning through the advanced practitioners. There is a real and active commitment to preparing students for work.
- There are strong links with feeder schools. College teachers deliver VGCSE business on behalf of one school for students aged 14-16.
- Integrated and highly effective employer engagement strategies:
  - provide extensive work placement opportunities for learners
  - support the currency of teachers' industrial experience and technical updating
  - involve employers in the assessment of learners' business proposals and presentations, and in the development of the curriculum
  - enable the college to provide highly effective customised training for employers with a high proportion of repeat business and referral, and very high employer satisfaction rates.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to fully implement the strategy to improve success rates on the BTEC National Diploma in Business
- to develop further the use of information learning technology in classroom-based learning activities

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business courses in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of the half-term following the inspection. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Russell Jordan  
Her Majesty's Inspector