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Mr David Linnell  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Linnell

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 20 and 21 September 2006. I am particularly grateful to managers and the teaching 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 six lessons.

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

Good practice observed

- Retention and pass rates on the vast majority of courses are significantly above national averages. Value added data indicates that most learners make very good progress although it is less consistent on advanced level business studies.
- Teaching and learning are of high quality. Teachers have high expectations of their students and provide very good support. Lessons include a good range of activities that engage students and make learning fun. Teachers use highly effective questioning techniques to develop students' depth of understanding. Group work is well organised. Relevant and up to date business and law case examples are used to motivate learners and build on their previous experiences.

- Teachers make effective use of their experience as examiners to develop learners' examination techniques. Appropriate targeting of examination resits enables learners to improve their grades.
- Law and business studies staff have developed excellent links with industry. A member of the business teaching team has responsibility for industrial liaison across the college. The college has a very good link with China. Many of the Chinese international students study economics and this helps enhance class discussions.
- A very good range of enrichment activities are available to students. All vocational students are involved in young enterprise and benefit from work experience. A student run law society meets weekly and includes visiting speakers, debates, trips and an annual dinner. All students enjoy the opportunity to take part in relevant visits and enter local and national competitions such as the "Target 2" Bank of England Competition.
- Learners' progress is closely monitored through regular assessments. Teachers' feedback on learners' written work is very supportive in helping them improve the quality of their answers. Students are very positive about the approachability and accessibility of their teachers in providing additional support.
- Leadership and management are strong. Teams work well together to share resources and teaching ideas. For example, the law team have developed highly effective study booklets.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- retention and progression of learners on the applied AS level business course
- ensure sufficient time is given at the end of each lesson to summarise the key learning that has taken place
- provide additional guidance to learners on how to effectively organise their wide range of business resources such as, class notes, study booklets and work produced on the computer
- make more effective use of IT to support learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business and law 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

Bev Barlow  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools