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Mr Bill Moorcroft  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Moorcroft

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 November 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 my 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 seven 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

- Students' achievements are very good and generally compare favourably with national averages on both full and part-time vocational courses. Pass rates on professional qualifications are outstanding.
- Lessons are very well planned with clear learning objectives that are understood by students. Teachers mostly use a range of student activities which includes group work, practical activities and research. These are supported by well written handouts and enriched by current

business examples to illustrate the theory taught. However, in a minority of the lessons observed there was an over reliance on the teacher and insufficient use of practical work for students to effectively develop their skills.

- Teachers make good use of learners' experiences at work and as consumers. A number of initiatives have led to greater involvement of employers in the delivery of business courses. For example, the integration of young enterprise into the BTEC First Diploma and the use of Trafford Business Ventures in assessing the business proposals of BTEC National Diploma students. Self assessment recognises that business links could be developed further, particularly for A-level students.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Staff development is effective in sharing good practice in teaching and learning.
- Teachers have a very good rapport with learners and provide positive and supportive feedback on performance in lessons. There is some scope for developing a more consistent approach in the use of effective teacher questioning techniques. The support and approachability of teachers is particularly valued by learners.
- Assignments and assessments are carefully marked and teachers' feedback carefully informs students how well they have done in relation to the criteria and exactly what they need to do to improve.
- There is a broad range of courses with clear progression routes. Enrichment activities, for example, visiting speakers, team building events at Delamere Forest and a residential to Canada enhance learners' skills and experiences. The business staff are flexible and have effectively developed the delivery of BTEC courses, without using technology, to meet the needs of a local community group.
- Students' progress is regularly and closely monitored. Students minimum target grade, informed by their prior attainment and induction assessments are used well to encourage them to achieve their potential.
- There is a strong commitment by staff at all levels to continuous improvement. Teams discuss students who are causing concern and develop strategies to enable them to get back on track. Self assessment clearly identifies the strengths and areas for development in the business area.

#### Areas for development

- On AS and A-level business courses, improve the progress of learners in relation to their GCSE grades on entry.
- Improve the attendance to and monitor the effectiveness of additional support, in improving learners' written and numerical skills.
- Provide greater guidance and support for students in keeping well organised files to effectively support their learning.

- Develop further the reliability and access to IT facilities to enable staff to use information learning technology in classroom-based learning activities and to provide extra support for students on the college's virtual learning environment.

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

Bev Barlow  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools