

20 November 2006

Mr Don Lawson  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Lawson

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5 – Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 02 and 03 November 2006. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work that took place to prepare for the visit and for giving up a great deal of time during the visit to meet with me. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

This visit is part of a series to provision in SSA 5 graded good or better at its most recent inspection, in order to evaluate how effective/good practice has been brought about, further improved and sustained. The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in construction. 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. All letters, following survey visits, will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: lesson observations; interviews with staff and learners; scrutiny of the examples of good practice provided including a tour of resources. I agreed to provide a summary of the observations of good practice seen and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed included:

- the flexible approach to course delivery and assessment; innovative timetabling maximises access to assessment and resources throughout the year
- assessment scheduling is very effective with good internal verification practice

- the carefully considered and highly effective curriculum management structure; roles and responsibilities of staff are very clearly defined and communication is good
- the very good support for new staff; this includes a significantly reduced timetable in the first term, the allocation of an experienced curriculum colleague as a mentor, a well planned and thorough induction programme and the close management of progress and development by the curriculum area manager
- the very good quality teaching and learning material used in electrical installation; learning materials are well produced and information learning technology (ILT) is used effectively; staff have successfully developed ideas from the '*standards unit*' teaching and learning resources and applied these to their own teaching
- the approach to the integration of key skills; vocationally relevant assignments with course specific assessment tasks are well produced with clear assessment criteria; key skills are developed alongside vocational skills by curriculum teachers supported by key skill specialists
- the excellent integration of work-based learning into the curriculum and its inclusion in a comprehensive quality assurance programme; work-based learners are managed by curriculum staff who have responsibility for all aspects of framework completion; work-based assessment and review are included in the quality assurance process
- the highly effective use of assessment in the workplace; dedicated assessors frequently observe learners in the workplace; learners have good access to assessors and a substantial amount of evidence is generated by direct observation within the workplace
- the good provision for 14-16 year olds; there are beneficial links with local schools including joint delivery of construction qualifications with two schools; courses are appropriate and give a valuable insight into construction careers and enable learners to gain a basic qualification; progression rates onto post-16 construction courses are good, especially to professional courses
- the highly effective use of an advanced practitioner to improve the quality of provision; a significant proportion of time is allocated for a range of activities designed to improve provision and practice; this includes; coaching, mentoring and staff development; and quality audits to monitor adherence to college policy and awarding body requirements
- the good development of courses to meet the needs and interests of local and regional employers and communities; this includes the successful development of an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualification in a construction context and courses to enable accreditation for migrant workers through the construction skills certification scheme (CSCS)
- the effective links with employers and manufacturers through the construction centre of vocational excellence (CoVE); these links enhance the curriculum by providing opportunities for learners to visit

working sites and use industry standard materials and equipment in training and assessment.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to improve the monitoring and tracking of learner progress so to avoid over-reliance on paper-based portfolio tracking systems
- to develop further, across the curriculum, the use of different teaching methods, including the use of ILT to enable learners to play a more active role in their lessons
- to improve tutorial provision to get a more consistent approach which includes the broader aspects of a tutorial entitlement.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop construction provision in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Joyce  
Her Majesty's Inspector