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Mr Chris Moody  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Moody

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme 2006-07

Sector Skills Area 5 - Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 20 and 21 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 all my thanks to all those concerned.

The 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 term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: lesson observations; interviews with staff and learners; scrutiny of 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 extended initial training (induction) for work-based learners. All new apprentices attend the college full-time for a four week period. During this time they are assessed for vocational ability, commitment, behaviour and attendance. At the end of the initial training learners are equipped with some basic skills to take into employment
- the additional qualifications gained by learners. A range of useful short courses enhance learners main programme of study and provide the opportunity for them to gain certificates in, for example, first aid, manual handling, safe use of ladders and mobile elevated working platforms. A college certificate is also awarded based on assessment outcomes and a range of employability measures
- the highly effective communications between teachers, learning support staff and work-based learning advisers. All key staff are well integrated into the curriculum area and work very effectively together. Good communication ensures all staff are aware of the extent of learner progress
- the strong links between theory and practical teaching in stone masonry. Teaching is very effectively planned and the sequence of practical activities relates directly to the sequence of theory sessions. Learners benefit by being able to quickly put into practice what they have been taught in the classroom
- the good advice, support and guidance provided in building evidence portfolios. Learners are given very clear guidance on what evidence is required in portfolios and value the support and guidance given by staff during frequent progress reviews. Portfolios are well presented and contain a wide range of appropriate evidence.

Areas for development, which we discussed included:

- to closely monitor the completion of apprenticeship frameworks for work based learners, especially timely completion rates.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Brown  
Additional Inspector