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10 January 2007

Mrs Stella Mbubaegbu  
Principal  
Highbury College  
Cosham  
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Dear Mrs Mbubaegbu

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5: Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 07 and 08 December 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 good practice seen and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- The clear college and corporation commitment to the development of a high quality construction provision. Excellent new resources at the Northarbour campus and a clear strategy to raise performance.

- The broad range of provision with good progression opportunities. An extensive range of courses are offered that are well matched to the needs of industry and the community. A wide range of trade and professional courses are offered and the college has good links with local schools. Progression opportunities exist from entry level to Foundation degree level and the college has successfully developed a construction related course that improves literacy and numeracy skills.
- The particularly effective links with employers and industry organisations. Close and productive links with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Henkel Unibond and a range of other employers and manufacturers provide sponsorship benefits that enhance the curriculum. The college is also working with English Heritage on a pilot course for the restoration of specialist plasterwork and with the Electrical Contractors Forum to provide an innovative programme-led pathway for full-time learners wishing to enter the industry.
- The particularly good support for learners. The many aspects of this include the on-site support from student services, the weekly visits from support specialists, the additional learning support system, the mentoring provided under the 'Support to Achieve' programme and a rapidly increasing range of study support materials on the virtual learning platform. Analysis of these and other support measures confirm they assist learners in making progress.
- The participation and success in local, regional and national competitions. The college actively encourages learners to participate in competitions that enable learners to demonstrate the high standard of practical work they produce. Several learners have won prestigious awards including a City and Guilds gold medal, the Crombie Trophy for plastering and the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) Regional Challenge.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to make better use of individual tutorials and learning plans by setting more challenging targets to encourage learners to progress
- to share good practice in assessment and tracking of learner progress across the department.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul L. Houghton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "P" and a horizontal line underneath the name.

Paul Houghton  
Additional Inspector