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Mr John Smith  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5: Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 11 and 12 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 good links with industry manufacturers and suppliers. These provide learners with an extensive range of high quality materials and products for practical training and assessment activities. Prizes provided by sponsors also motivate students and encourage them to make good progress.

- The motivation and encouragement for learners provided through regular entry into regional and national competitions. The college frequently enters skills competitions which encourages learners to produce work of high quality.
- The particularly good support and encouragement for learners on the introductory diploma course. A well devised tutorial programme and the 'merit profile' process enables learners to progress onto foundation and intermediate construction awards.
- The good theory teaching, particularly in plumbing and gas fitting. Course delivery is well planned to ensure very effective links between theory and practical elements of programmes.
- The effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) in theory lessons. High quality materials are used effectively which engage learners and allow them to participate and make progress.
- The highly effective use of lesson observations and staff appraisal to inform staff development and support. These processes have had a measurable impact in improving the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- The extensive schools partnership programmes. These support progression onto post 16 training and enable school pupils to experience construction education and training.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to address the decline in success rates on some level three programmes
- to develop consistency in the setting of clear, specific and measurable targets in learners' tutorial action plans and reviews
- to set clear, specific and measurable targets to address issues identified through self-assessment.

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

Malcolm Fraser  
Additional Inspector