

28 March 2007

Mr Richard Chambers
Principal
Lambeth College
Clapham Centre
45 Clapham Common
Southside
London SW4 9BL

Dear Mr Chambers

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5 – Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 15 and 16 February 2007. 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

- The outstanding support from senior leaders and managers. The college has a clear strategic direction and supports construction extremely well. Substantial investment has already improved facilities for stonemasonry, painting and decorating and plumbing, with further improvement for wood trades planned for later this year.

- The good departmental and course management. Management is responsive and supportive. The head of construction provides good leadership. Course managers work as an effective, mutually supportive team and staff morale is high. Clear target setting underpins performance and good quality assurance systems effectively monitor performance.
- The good monitoring of learner progress. Learners' progress is frequently monitored and good feedback is provided. Any learner at risk of failing their course is identified, encouraged and supported to succeed. Overall success rates show a year on year improvement on many courses.
- The successful efforts to promote diversity. The college has successfully recruited to construction courses a high proportion of learners from minority ethnic heritage with many female learners also enrolled. Staffing within the section reflects the diverse student population well and includes a number of female staff. College publicity material reflect the commitment to equality and diversity.
- The excellent industry partnerships enhancing the curriculum. The School has a good record of establishing partnerships which benefit learners. Many links have been made with professional bodies and major construction industry players. In a recent example, a training centre has been established at Battersea Power Station offering real site experience for learners from many different groups.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to improve tutorial provision to get a more consistent approach which includes the broader aspects of a tutorial entitlement
- to encourage the wider use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to further support teaching and learning.

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 Houghton
Additional Inspector