

30 March 2007

Ms Sarah Robinson
Principal
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Dear Ms Robinson

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5 – Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 26 and 27 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 well organised teaching and learning. Teaching is well planned with clear learning outcomes shared with students. There are good practical demonstrations and good use is made of formative assessment. Learners produce practical work of a high standard. The tracking and monitoring of learners' progress is good.

- The good tutorial programme. Tutorial provision includes a wide range of topics and enrichment opportunities for full-time learners. Many activities motivate learners and enable them to develop valuable skills in communication and team working. Tutorial activities are well designed to cover many of the 'every child matters' themes enabling the personal development of learners.
- The strong student voice within the college. Learners are able to have their say in the running of the college and in the design and content of courses. Student representatives are elected from each course and they are able to review the learning programmes with the principal at regular meetings.
- The good provision of additional learning support. Good additional support is provided to learners that require it. The impact of additional support is well monitored and comparisons made between the success rates of those receiving support and those that do not. Learners receiving support have slightly higher success rates than those not receiving support.
- The proactive response to developments in the 14 - 19 curriculum. The college has responded well and is engaged in a number of initiatives to promote and engage young people in construction education and training. The 'Skills Plus' programme enables pupils in years 10 and 11 who are not engaging in education to access construction courses and the college has taken a lead role in promoting and developing the construction diploma.
- The well established links with employers. An active employer forum frequently reviews and advises on construction provision and members provide opportunities for work-placements and visits. Partnership arrangements with companies and suppliers have also provided resources, equipment and specialist advice and guidance when establishing aspects of the provision which benefit learners.
- The clear progression routes from one level to the next. There are several examples of learners who have progressed from level 1 to level 4 in construction and in doing so have made the transition from craft to technician qualifications. A high proportion of students from the national certificate and diploma courses progress onto level 4 qualifications.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to increase the frequency of work-place review and assessment visits for electrical installation apprentices
- to address the poor pass rates on some level 1 courses and to improve the framework completion rates for work-based learning programmes
- to provide more detailed information on the range of progression pathways available and the requirements/ expectations of each option.

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