

28 March 2007

Mr Ian Pryce  
Principal  
Bedford College  
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Bedford  
Bedfordshire  
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Dear Mr Pryce

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5 – Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 05 and 06 March 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 highly effective monitoring of learners' progress in carpentry and joinery. Learners' progress is robustly monitored via electronic and paper-based tracking sheets. Links from tracking sheets to the virtual learning environment (VLE) effectively signpost related learning materials for students to use which aids their progress.

- The good support provided by Advanced Practitioners to improve teaching and learning. Advanced Practitioners mentor new staff throughout their probationary period, carry out lesson observations and provide training aimed at improving teaching and learning. They have played an active role in developing the VLE.
- The development and promotion of sustainable technologies in plumbing. Learners on the full-time plumbing course complete a sustainable level 1 course as part of their studies. The college has also delivered solar domestic hot water installation courses to 134 adult learners.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to improve the learning environment, layout and allocation of space within the brickwork workshop.

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

Stephen Brown  
Additional Inspector