

04 April 2007

Mr Ian Peake
Principal
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Dear Mr Peake

Ofsted Subject Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 5 – Construction

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 06 and 07 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 good development of provision. The college has introduced a foundation course in construction for learners that otherwise would not have had the opportunity to experience construction related activities. All learners are assessed as operating at either entry level 3 or level 1. Learners are taught foundation skills alongside vocational skills and are encouraged to address basic literary needs in a supportive environment.
- The good practical teaching in carpentry and brickwork. Practical tasks are well designed and are sufficiently complex to challenge learners. In many lessons teachers carefully select learners to work in pairs. Learners with

developed practical skills are often paired with learners needing support, although, over time learners are expected to work with all their peers. Team-work amongst learners is well developed and the standard of practical work produced is good.

- The good tracking and monitoring of learner progress. Learner tracking sheets are on display in all workshops. They are up-dated on a regular basis. Tracking sheets are used as a starting point when discussing learner progress and inform, for example, work-based learner reviews.
- The well considered planning for new accommodation. Teachers and technicians have been extensively involved with relocating provision to temporary accommodation and in planning the new accommodation. Temporary workshops have been modeled on layouts and sizes of the proposed new build enabling teachers to consider solutions to difficulties as they arise.
- The positive promotion of apprenticeships for full-time learners. Expectations are that full-time learners will progress to apprenticeship programmes after completing their course. The work based learning co-ordinator works well with employers to recruit learners to apprenticeships that have completed the full-time course. Of the 60 learners completing foundation courses in 2005-06, 48 have returned on apprenticeship programmes.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to provide more realistic working conditions for learners on carpentry and joinery courses
- to improve the retention of learners on the intermediate construction award in painting and decorating for part-time learners.

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