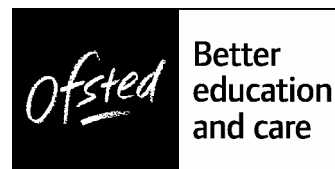


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23 November 2006

Ms M Hall
Head of College
Capel Manor College
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Dear Ms Hall

Ofsted Subject Survey Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 3 - Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 15 November. I am particularly grateful to you and the teaching staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up a great deal of their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to other staff and learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice subject survey in agriculture, horticulture and animal care. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but should I wish to include specific aspects of practice I will contact the college first. All college letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform judgements included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of good practice examples.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in Floristry, Horticulture and Garden Design and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed included:

- a proactive approach to curriculum development to ensure that the curriculum in each subject area is appropriate in terms of level, content and industrial relevance including for legislative requirements through a high level of involvement by managers and teachers including

working directly with awarding bodies and preparing curriculum documentation for accreditation

- the development of tailored provision for specific land-based employer needs, such as amenity horticulture for public parks
- very effective actions to widen participation using taster days, links with community associations and centres, development of dedicated courses for non-traditional participants in horticulture using links with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses to successfully attract a much higher proportion of learners from Black and minority ethnic groups into land-based learning
- very effective use of physical resources, linking commercial practice with teaching environments and promoting industrial involvement through sponsorship and donation of materials as well as creating a show case of garden design and a modern efficient floristry centre supplying three other college centres with floral materials
- high levels of involvement with competition work including at national level through taking part in the Chelsea Flower Show and the provision of an annual calendar of college-based events, such as the City Harvest Festival and the Festival of Leather, to promote land-based subject areas and attract wide interest
- active promotion of strong links with horticultural, floristry and garden design industries including through work experience, high usage of part-time teachers who still are active practitioners and through the work of the two Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in Floristry and Horticulture
- very effective development of inexperienced teachers in floristry through work-shadowing and cleverly managed mentoring by experienced teachers
- effective standardisation of learning materials and schemes of work across all college centres with careful quality control of handouts and workbooks to ensure high quality presentation, correct spelling and grammar and effectiveness in promoting learning
- promotion of peer and self evaluation in both learning and assessed work
- maintaining and promoting the provision of the very specialist craft area of hand-made saddlery and providing a dedicated physical resource and specialist teachers for a growing number of learners.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- sharing of good practice, particularly at department level
- further development of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to encourage interactive learning and provide a resource base for learners as well as electronic records of physical resources
- use of initial assessment information, including of vocational skill, to develop ways of measuring the added vocational value to learners whilst at the college

- further promotion of equality and diversity and environmental sustainability through the curriculum, over and above where this occurs as part of module content.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop land-based courses in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Francis
Her Majesty's Inspector