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09 December 2006

Ms C George
Boston YA Programme Manager
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Dear Ms George

Ofsted survey of the Young Apprenticeships programme: 2006/07

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 08 December 2006 to look at work in the Young Apprenticeships programme.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points made in my feedback at the end of the visit, to support development of the partnership. This follows.

The overall effectiveness of the Boston Young Apprenticeships (YA) Partnership was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are good.

- All pupils are working towards vocationally relevant qualifications at level 2 in hairdressing and preparation for employment.

- Standards of practical skill displayed by pupils are good and above that expected for their time on the programme. Assignments and tests indicate a good grasp of underpinning knowledge and understanding.

The pupils' personal development and well being are good.

- Attendance is very high at 94% and pupils express enjoyment in the programme.
- Pupils behave in a mature manner with teamwork and peer support being observed.
- Pupils display good levels of professional standards that include adherence to health and safety.
- Independent learning is being developed and encouraged through a series of tasks that require pupils to gather evidence from several sources and present it in the form of an assignment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are good.

- The teaching in the college and training provider is coordinated to help develop professional and commercial hairdressing standards amongst the pupils.
- Pupils show and express a high level of enjoyment, interest and motivation in their lessons.
- Assessment of pupils is thorough and includes constructive feedback on how pupils can improve.

Curriculum provision is good.

- Work experience is planned for term two. Initial sheltered experience is being given in term one via assisting full-time students at college to build up confidence and ability prior to planned external placements taking place.
- The programme is made up of complementary parts delivered by college and training provider and working towards achievement of a level 2 in hairdressing. Enrichment activities include working towards a level 2 qualification in preparation for employment and visits to Salon International that help develop pupils' understanding of working requirements and standards in hairdressing.
- School and college timetables have been adjusted to ensure pupils can still access the core curriculum and spend two days on the YA programme. The programme requirements of two days per week YA allocation and fifty days work experience are built in.

Care guidance and support are good.

- Individual learning plans (ILPS) are clear and used by staff and pupils to monitor personal progress but do not link effectively with tracking of vocational progress.
- Information about the programme for pupils and parents was of high quality and a good range of progression routes at 16 is available.
- Procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour are effective.
- Pupils receive good one to one support and guidance within lessons.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- Good support has come from the sector skills council (SSC) who have also been involved in the selection procedure and providing teaching materials.
- An effective partnership agreement has been developed through the college's experiences with the increased flexibility programme. Schools are aware of the calibre of pupils needed and involvement with parents is from day one.
- Management of the programme and policies is shared between the college, schools and training provider. Partners meet twice per term with SSC, employers and school representatives to discuss operational issues relating to individual pupil progress.
- Focused forum meetings take place termly to deal with strategic issues relating to cohort progress and performance, recruitment, selection and induction and planning of new cohort delivery.
- No evidence was available on how the partnership is attempting to reduce gender stereotyping.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- lack of evidence to support development of key skills
- linking ILPs to tracking of progress in portfolios
- show clearly how learning is being checked in lessons
- consider strategies to address gender imbalance.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your Young Apprenticeships programme.

As explained in my previous letter, a copy of this feedback will be sent to Lincolnshire LA, Lincolnshire and Rutland LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted web-site.

Yours sincerely

Les Brewer
Additional Inspector