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Mr David Cheetham  
Principal  
Gateshead College  
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Dear Mr Cheetham

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006/07

Sector Skills Area 04: Engineering and manufacturing technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 06 and 07 December 2006. I am particularly grateful to the teaching and other staff for 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 students who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey. 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. College letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and copied to the LSC. The letters will also be available to the next inspection team to visit the college and to inform your AAV visits.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff, students and employers, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

I said I would provide a summary of my observations and of the good practice seen and to suggest areas for development.

Good practice observed included:

- College data shows high success rates on level 1 and 2 adult and 16-18 programmes both significantly above the national average.

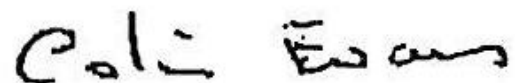
- Aspects of teaching and learning included:
  - very effective use of information and learning technology to support learning; for example, in one lesson on vehicle braking systems, the whiteboard screen was used well to hide or reveal component parts as required; the interactive assessment of learners was facilitated well by learners use of handset controllers to answer questions
  - learners contributed well during lessons, working well individually, in groups and in class discussions
  - teachers used demonstrations effectively during practical work
  - teaching was carefully matched to the needs of each learner.
- Matters relating to health and safety matters are promoted and reinforced thoroughly during induction, in the classroom, in workshops and during progress reviews in the workplace. Personal protective equipment is allocated and inspected daily. Risk assessment assignments are built into the curriculum.
- Teaching is delivered flexible to suit the needs of full-time and part-time learners and the needs of employers.
- Learners' needs and levels of prior attainment are gathered carefully early in their courses. For example, induction procedures include a 'freshers' fayre', team building, and individual guidance, initial assessment covers basic skills, other additional support needs and mechanical aptitude testing. Individual learning plans draw appropriately from the results.
- Outstanding employer engagement. Major employers are closely involved in curriculum planning, advising learners about employment opportunities and assessing their skills and aptitudes.
- Good staff development. The programme provides good support for technical and industrial updating, for example through industrial secondments and attendance on manufacturers' courses. There is an appropriate focus on the use of ILT in teaching and on disseminating good practice.
- The development of resources. Since the last inspection a new motor vehicle and manufacturing centre has been established which is equipped with the latest industry standard equipment and motor vehicles. Employers have donated substantially to the equipment based and vehicle stock. Classrooms are spacious, well furnished and well equipped with teaching aids.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- the narrow range of provision. For example only courses at level 4 are available in mechanical and electrical engineering and only level 1 provision in fabrication and welding
- insufficient use of formative assessment, for example directed questioning, to check on learners' understanding during lessons.

Please note that these findings do not constitute a full evaluation of the quality of the department and are based on a short visit.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop engineering and manufacturing courses.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Christopher Green  
Additional Inspector