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17 November 2006

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Dear Mrs Maxwell

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 13 and 14 November. I am particularly grateful to teaching and other 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 staff and 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 and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons. As agreed, my visit covered provision in your automotive section only.

I have provided below a summary of my observations, the good practice seen and suggested areas for development.

Good practice observed:

- High success rates for most courses. College data shows success rates for learners aged 16-18 and for adult learners in 2005-06 are well above national averages.

- Aspects of teaching and learning, including:
  - lessons include a good variety of learning activities which succeed in engaging and sustaining learner's interests
  - innovative approaches to teaching and learning which succeed in engaging learners; these are well supported by pre-prepared notes and gapped hand-outs which ensure all learners take away a good record of the learning points
  - the desired learning outcomes form a clear focus for the teaching; teaching is very well planned and structured
  - there is good access to and use of information learning technology
  - teachers commitment to meeting the needs of learners; teachers establish a good rapport with the learners and learners respond well; frequent use is made of well-focussed questioning to ensure learners understand the subject matter.
  
- Highly effective curriculum management. Schemes of work are appropriately detailed and teaching is well planned. The curriculum gives suitable attention to the development of wider skills through, for example, work experience and themed weeks. Course teams meet regularly and give careful attention to learners' progress. Teachers take responsibility for the resources within teaching rooms.
- Good integration of key skills. Key skills development and assessment are planned into the vocational teaching.
- Very good induction of learners. Prospective learners are supported and guided well before the start of their programme. For example, there are taster days and bridging days in the summer term and induction includes a wide variety of appropriate activities. Close attention is given to ensuring learners are placed on the right course.
- Excellent target setting and monitoring of student progress. Each learner's progress and the performance of class groups are carefully monitored. A competitive element, whereby, for example, scores for attendance and progress are prominently displayed and from which prizes are awarded, is effective at motivating learners.
- Excellent sharing of good practice between course teams. Learning materials are readily available as a departmental resource. Innovative practice in teaching and learning is shared and consistently good teaching is a feature of the department.
- Effective development of employer engagement. Employers contribute to decisions on the strategic direction of the department. The department provides web-based inter-active training with small and

medium sized employers and works closely with a range of employers to deliver apprenticeship programmes and other work-based learning. The department benefits from equipment sponsored by employers.

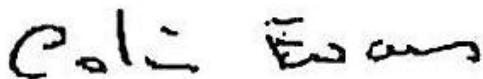
- Excellent automotive facilities and resources. For example, the department has an up-to date vehicle diagnostics laboratory, and an extensive range of teaching resources. The realistic working environments provide an outstanding teaching facility.
- Highly effective processes of quality improvement. Senior managers and course leaders review the quality of the provision regularly and monitor progress carefully against targets. These quality assurance processes are effective at improving the provision. The self-assessment report accurately reflects the strengths and areas for development of the automotive section.

Areas for development, which were discussed in my verbal feedback, included:

- success rates for the NVQ level 2 course
- the inclusion of measurable targets in some action plans
- the presentation of more detailed data for work-based learning.

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.



Michael Short  
Additional inspector