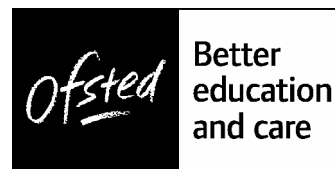


Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



10 November 2006

Mr Ted Parker  
Principal  
Barking College  
Dagenham Road  
Romford  
Essex  
RM7 0XU

Dear Mr Parker

Ofsted Survey Programme 2006/07

Aspect: The contribution made by CoVEs to the development of vocational work, including preparation for the specialised 14-19 diplomas, in schools.

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 09 November 2006. I am particularly grateful for all of the hard work which Bob Williams did in preparing the programme and background documentation. Please pass on my thanks to all of the staff who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey into CoVEs' work with schools. Where published reports cite specific aspects of good practice it is usual practice to name the colleges involved. However, where reports identify common issues which represent barriers to progress, individual colleges will not be named.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed included:

How well do learners achieve?

- Schools report improved attendance and better motivation of students who attend the college. Students aged 14-16 years are receiving a very thorough grounding in a wide variety of craft skills and produce practical work which is often of an excellent standard. They are also well equipped to make an informed choice of the construction course they wish to take next from the wide range which the college offers.

How effective are teaching, training and learning?

- Teaching, training and learning are good. Students respond positively to their work at the college. They find their studies both interesting and challenging. Student progress is monitored carefully and procedures for reporting progress to schools, parents and the students themselves are comprehensive. The college's programme of lesson observations provides an effective check on the continuing quality of teaching in the CoVE. Partnership schools are also fully involved in the procedures for assessing and monitoring the quality of teaching.

How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?

- Current 14-16 programmes provide students with excellent opportunities to progress, and provide an effective platform for the planned introduction of the specialised diploma. A particularly good example of well planned collaborative provision which is well matched to the needs and aspirations of students is provided by the college's partnership with the Jo Richardson Community School. Jo Richardson has a new school building that was opened in September 2005. The fitment for construction is of a high standard and was designed by staff at the college. Barking College teachers travel to the school to deliver practical and theoretical tuition for the GCSE in construction in both carpentry and decorating. They are assisted by technology teachers from the school. The monitoring of students' performance is exemplary. Although it is too early to judge overall success rates, students on the programme are achieving better than their starting points would suggest, and the school looks set to exceed its success target for the course.

This is an excellent example of the impact of the CoVE because:

- teaching is good and the school has access to better qualified teachers than they otherwise might
- effective support systems from the CoVE are well used at the school
- joint monitoring and review arrangements are excellent
- there are clear progression pathways in construction post GCSE through the CoVE.

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

- The CoVE has played a leading role in the development of structures to support the specialised diploma in construction. The excellent facilities at the college, the broad range of post-diploma progression pathways in construction and the enthusiastic way in which staff in construction have

embraced the challenges of delivering the diploma provide a very strong foundation for the more detailed planning which lies ahead.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- it is not clear how the developments in specialised diplomas at the college relate to the local authority's overall plan for delivering specialised diplomas. Details have yet to emerge on the overarching structure for the diplomas and as yet no overall picture exists of where the diplomas will be taught, the partners who will be involved or the progression routes which will be available to successful students on completion. Given the limited amount of time available before the diploma launch, this lack of clarity is a concern
- the provision of impartial information, advice and guidance to students has yet to be included in the diploma bid and is a priority for development
- employers are not yet involved as fully as they might be in diploma developments
- there are continuing staff development needs because awareness of the diplomas is not yet shared sufficiently. In particular, teachers in schools would benefit from the expertise and knowledge of staff in the CoVE to further their understanding of the specialised diploma in construction.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the ways in which your CoVE supports 14-19 curriculum development in the area.

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 at the end of the half-term following the visit. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Lindsay Hebditch  
Her Majesty's Inspector