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Mr Doug Boynton
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Dear Mr Boynton

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 06 December 2006. I am particularly grateful to Roger Sly for his hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up his time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to other staff, particularly Paul Townsley, 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?

- The highly successful Young Apprenticeship (YA) scheme impacts positively on learners' overall progress and attainment at school. In 2006, the success rate for the YA programme was 85% and it had a 96% pass rate. This raised the attainment rate of pupils with 5 A*-C grades at GCSE by five percentage points overall at both schools where YA learners came from. The schools identified that the YA scheme had a positive

effect on learners' attainment in other subjects at school. Young Apprenticeship learners attained higher than expected average point scores across a range of subjects.

- CoVE teachers help YA learners to further develop their ICT, maths and science ability when studying for a range of qualifications at college. Learners are also helped to develop a disciplined approach towards their work, reliability and very good attendance. Improved behaviour and improved self-confidence are other benefits that contribute to learners' success at broader attainment. Learners develop their communication skills well and have better levels of motivation at school.
- The retention rate for learners on the vocational GCSE improved to 75% last year. Whilst all learners achieved a GCSE, none were graded A*-C.

How effective are teaching, training and learning?

- There is good collaboration with schools to develop the skills needed by teachers in schools and colleges. College teachers are better prepared to teach 14 to 16-year-old learners and teachers from participating schools are up-to-date in specialist technology areas. Four CoVE teachers undertook a BTEC course to develop skills for teaching 14 to 16-year-olds. This involved CoVE teachers in attending day placements to shadow teachers in a school.
- CoVE teachers received training in behaviour management techniques for 14 to 16 year old learners, including reward and praise techniques and how to ensure appropriate pace and level of activity in lessons. The CoVE has updated school teachers' technical skills to facilitate the teaching of technical subjects at school. Meetings which promote the sharing of good practice have been attended by college teachers; a work based learning provider and school teachers. They are now organised by the local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC).

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

- There is very productive joint working with schools to expand the curriculum at Key Stage 4. The CoVE provides a range of qualifications to meet the needs of school learners at Key Stage 4. These include a vocational double award GCSE, an ABC certificate in motor vehicle studies at level 1, an EAL foundation certificate in engineering at level 1, the Young Apprenticeship programme and the teaching and assessment of six key skills by a college teacher at a school. The CoVE draws effectively on experiences and feedback from employers and learners to make improvements to curriculum design and delivery. Learners frequently take part in forums to discuss their courses and experiences in college. They also complete questionnaires each term so that their voice and opinions on all aspects of their courses are heard. Actions are put in place to

address concerns. The curriculum has changed in response to learner feedback, such as offering an additional EAL course.

- The college worked with a school to produce a joint scheme of work for motor vehicle studies which is delivered jointly, partly at school and partly at college. A teacher from the school team teaches and supports learners during their lessons at college. The schoolteacher was updated by CoVE teachers. Another teacher was updated at college and delivered lessons in design and technology for school pupils, using college resources both at school and at college. The college provides a teacher to deliver all six key skills at a partner school for 60 to 70 learners.
- Learning pathways have been devised for 14 to 19-year-old learners in engineering at levels 1, 2 and 3. The EAL level 1 course is a broad programme and gives three options at levels 2 and 3. Young apprentices can go on to study at level 3 at college or progress straight into an apprenticeship. GCSE learners can progress to post-16 options including PEO at level 2. Further progression is available to foundation degree and HND/C level. Learner progression rates from 14-16 courses onto college courses are high.

How well are learners guided and supported?

- The CoVE provides good support for schools by making specialist resources available for school use in design and technology lessons and by ensuring that 14 to 16 learners receive appropriate support and information. The CoVE loaned equipment to a school for use in design and technology lessons. That school also uses college facilities, equipment and supporting technician staff when teaching a particular project in design and technology. Schools send support teachers to accompany Increased Flexibility Project learners whilst at college. Young Apprentice learners are supported effectively by college teachers. Extra academic support by CoVE teachers is readily available for any learner in need.
- The college ensures that 14 to 16-year-old learners receive good quality information about the CoVE. All schools are provided with prospectuses and information about the CoVE provision. Eleven out of 14 schools attended taster days last year. The Young apprenticeship scheme includes level 2 PEO in maintenance and operations, a foundation certificate in health and safety and 50 days work experience with five different employers. For learners on the increased flexibility programme there are three pathways; these are a vocational GCSE double award in engineering at level 2, an ABC certificate in motor vehicle studies at level 1, and an EAL foundation certificate in engineering at level 1. The college has a web site for 14 to 16-year-olds. Users, who may not be learners of the college, are invited to join the web club. They receive free gifts, discounted access to local sports facilities and the ice rink and up-to-date information about college courses. The local partnership has decided that advice and guidance about the new diplomas to learners will be

centralised. This will be further developed when more details about the content of the diplomas are available in the summer of 2007.

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

- The CoVE demonstrates successful leadership and management of programmes and thorough quality assurance. The CoVE takes account of feedback from all stakeholders and actions taken bring about improvements to the quality of provision. Work on the specialised diplomas has recently accelerated and progress is satisfactory. Curriculum leadership is of high quality. There are clear structures and well defined roles and responsibilities. Strategies for the development of the curriculum are coherent. Plans are in place to discontinue offering the vocational GCSE this year and replace it with a BTEC first diploma which will better suit learners' needs.
- The CoVE works extensively with employers to create a range of good work experience placements for Young Apprenticeship learners and to refine the curriculum. Employer forum meetings are held each term. Employers provide feedback through a questionnaire each year. Learners complete a questionnaire each term.
- The CoVE ensures that there is timely and useful communication with schools, employers and parents to report on progress and ensure the smooth running of arrangements. Schools report that communication about learners' progress at college is quick and effective. Attendance, progress and problems are openly and systematically communicated very effectively by the CoVE. Communication with employers occurs daily to ensure that learners are attending their placements and to resolve any issues.
- Partnership working on the new diplomas has recently accelerated and much is now being done, including the outline agreement on timetabling with local schools and on more detailed preparations for the introduction of the diplomas. The CoVE and the new technology school are leading on the development of the specialised diplomas in engineering. Resources are highly impressive and certainly sufficient. £2M has been invested in the industry-standard equipment used by learners.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- the harmonising of timetables across all partner organisations to ensure that the specialised diplomas are available to learners from all schools
- the need to establish good arrangements for the transportation of learners across the area.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the ways in which your CoVE supports 14 to 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

Gloria Dolan
Her Majesty's Inspector