

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



13 January 2007

Ms Michele Sutton
Principal
Bradford College
Great Horton Road
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD7 1AY

Dear Ms Sutton

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 11 December 2006. I am particularly grateful to Kath, Debbie and Sue for their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to other staff who gave up their time to talk to me. I would like to send particular thanks to the two students who made a special journey to college to meet me and I would like to compliment the catering students who provided a delicious buffet lunch.

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

- Very good achievement and standards. There are high success rates on courses for 14 to 16 year olds; both retention and pass rates are high with many at 100%. There are high success rates on applied science courses and students from the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) are producing science work of a good standard. Many 14 to 16 year olds who attend college

courses are developing their interpersonal skills and are becoming increasingly confident and mature.

- Two of the CoVEs and their associated areas have established reputations with local schools making them Bradford Confederation's choice to lead bids for specialist diplomas. The gas installation CoVE is part of the construction area which has a long tradition of delivering 14-16 vocational provision. Similarly, beauty and complementary therapies and hairdressing have well established and highly regarded 14-16 provision.
- The applied science CoVE offers a very wide range of provision including courses in dispensing ophthalmics and pharmacy. The staff have a very good range of specialist expertise in, for example, food technology and pathology which they use to enhance their applied science courses. They share their schemes of work, lesson plans and resources with other colleges and schools enabling them to make applied science more relevant and interesting. Science students benefit from very good curriculum enrichment that includes industrial visits - good practice that is also shared with other providers. The expertise of the science staff is also utilised very effectively in the beauty and complementary therapies CoVE and is a key factor in the CoVE's success.
- The college has a well established and demonstrable record of good partnership working. The college has a great deal of expertise in vocational education but is happy to play a supporting role as well as taking the lead in the preparation of bids for the new diplomas. There are many examples of CoVE staff, and other college managers, giving advice to schools and other providers to help them to set up vocational provision. The college has helped plan new accommodation, advised on resources and provided specialist teachers in some instances.
- The college is willing to support vocational provision when funding is delayed or has been withdrawn. The college continues to provide uniforms and equipment for 14 to 16 year olds attending college courses even though it is no longer receiving Increased Flexibility Project (IFP) funding. The college has also taken on the responsibility for the leadership and management of the gas installations CoVE, when Keighley College could no longer continue, despite a long delay before receiving the necessary funding.
- The college has played a major role in developing quality improvement protocols for all 14 to 19 collaborative provision across the five confederations in the Bradford area. The protocols include checklists, toolkits and mappings to the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) and Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes.
- The development of the '14-19 prospectus of learning opportunities' is well advanced in Bradford. There is a paper-based 14-16 vocational prospectus already in use and a database has already been established that will form the basis of the 14-19 prospectus.

The area for development, which we discussed:

- There is an urgent need to establish vocational courses as an attractive option for students of all abilities. Work needs to be done, especially in schools, to change the perception that vocational courses are for low ability or disaffected students. It is important that attitudes change before the introduction of the new diplomas.

I would also like to note the concern that there are no plans for a specialist diploma in applied science. Alternative vocational qualifications in applied science exist but there are concerns about their long term currency once the new diplomas become established.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the ways in which your CoVEs support 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. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector